

# **INUIT DISCOURSE AND IDENTITY AFTER THE ADVENT OF NUNAVUT**

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**(with the collaboration of Vincent Collette)**

**Note: the opinions expressed in this report are solely those of the author, and they do not necessarily reflect the opinions of any individual or organisation involved in the research upon which the report was based.**

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Québec  
October 2006**

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## Introduction

This report outlines the principal findings of a research project undertaken conjointly by Université Laval's CIÉRA and Nunavut Arctic College's (Nunatta Campus) Inuit Language and Culture Programs, thanks to Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) funds. The project was under the direction of Prof. Louis-Jacques Dorais (Université Laval) and Dr. Susan Sammons (Nunavut Arctic College). The present report, written by L.J. Dorais, is based for a large part on an analysis of interview data undertaken in 2004-05 by Vincent Collette, M.A. (Anthropology). These interviews, in Inuktitut or English, had been conducted in 2003-04 in Iqaluit by Nunavut Arctic College students and staff. May all researchers, interviewers and interviewees be sincerely thanked here.

The objective of the project was to understand the significant way through which speakers of Inuktitut living in Iqaluit, the capital of the Canadian territory of Nunavut<sup>1</sup>, were reflecting on the current and future language situation in the territory after the advent of Nunavut on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999, and how these reflections were linked to the construction and enactment of Inuit identity. The research aimed at extending Dorais' and Sammons' previous study of discourse and identity in the Baffin region<sup>2</sup>, completed for the most part before the advent of Nunavut, in a new direction: how does the creation of a new political entity with an Inuit majority have influenced this majority's language attitudes. On the basis of former research, it was postulated that the advent of Nunavut had heightened the expectations of many speakers of Inuktitut in terms of the practical usefulness of their language as compared to English, even if this had not yet translated into changes in one's linguistic behaviour. In terms of identity construction, this added value attributed to Inuktitut would help reinforcing Inuit ethnicity, though the part it might play in the elaboration of a territorial ("Nunavutian") identity was not clear. The research proposed to verify and clarify these postulates in order to better understand the processes at work, as well as to provide policy makers with reliable information on language attitudes after the advent of Nunavut.

The research was original and aimed at bringing new conceptual insights on the relation between political change, language attitudes, the language market<sup>3</sup>, and ethnic identity in a Canadian Aboriginal context. It was badly needed too. According to a report submitted in 2002 by the Nunavut Languages Commissioner, the Government of Nunavut should rely on research data (and, of course, other types of action) if it was to fulfil its goal of making Inuktitut the working language of public administration by 2020.

The research endeavoured to answer the three following questions:

1. Is the practical value of Inuktitut – in terms of giving access to political and social power, the job market, and the outside world – perceived as having been (or expected to be) on the increase since the advent of Nunavut?

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<sup>1</sup> With ca. 6000 residents, almost half of which are non-Inuit, Iqaluit is Nunavut's largest community.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Dorais, L.J. and S. Sammons, *Language in Nunavut. Discourse and Identity in the Baffin Region*, Iqaluit, Nunavut Arctic College and Québec, GÉTIC (Université Laval), 2002.

<sup>3</sup> According to the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (*Language and Symbolic Power*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1991), languages are monetarily valued commodities whose mastery endows speakers with more or less social (or sociolinguistic) capital on the economic market.

2. Is language usage (including language choice between Inuktitut and English) perceived or expected to change after the advent of Nunavut?
3. Does the eventual perception of a strengthening of Inuit, language and society, because of the advent of Nunavut, reinforce (or is it expected to reinforce) Inuit identity, including territorial identity?

Data for answering these questions were collected by way of the already mentioned interviews conducted in Iqaluit in 2003-04, with 35 Inuit residents (17 men and 18 women, aged between 18 and 85), 10 of whom were originally from Igloolik or Kimmirut – two smaller and more ethnically homogeneous villages of the Baffin region – and had been living in Iqaluit since a few years at interview time. Interviews were also conducted in 2003 with six more individuals from Iqaluit, four Inuit and two Qallunaat professionally involved in various aspects of language planning and development. For comparison's sake, two more interviews with language professionals were completed in Cambridge Bay (in the Kitikmeot region of Nunavut) in May 2006. In addition, fieldwork in Iqaluit in February-March 2005 (by L.J. Dorais) and June-August 2005 (by Laval Ph.D. student Aurélie Hot) enabled researchers to consult written documents on language use and discuss questions of Inuktitut orality and literacy with local residents.

The major part of the present report consists in an analysis of data collected through the already mentioned 35 interviews conducted with Iqaluit Inuit. The analysis will deal successively with the respondents' usage of Inuktitut and English; with the way they perceive the general evolution of language practices since the advent of Nunavut; with the usefulness of Inuktitut and the linguistic choices that this entails; with the perceived relationship between language, politics and administrative practices; with the future of Inuktitut as seen by respondents; and with Inuit identity under Nunavut. That section will be followed by a much shorter analysis of interviews with language professionals, and the report will conclude on some reflections inspired by the interviews, as well as by our informal discussions with Iqaluit residents and the consultation of published documents.

## Interviews with Iqaluit residents

The 35 interviews conducted in Iqaluit in 2003-04 with Inuit residents were analysed by Vincent Collette, then an M.A, student in anthropology at Université Laval, between May and July 2004, and in January 2005. Collette used the NuDist™ program for analysing qualitative data as his principal tool, but he also relied on simple, non computerised comparison. The analysis does not include any quantitative statistical correlation.

Let it be reminded that the 35 Iqaluit respondents included 17 men and 18 women, aged between 18 and 85, 10 of whom were originally from Igloolik or Kimmirut. They were interviewed in Inuktitut or English, depending on their preference, by Nunavut Arctic College students and staff. Interviewees were chosen by the interviewers, but these had to abide by strict criteria in terms of gender, age group and geographical origin of the respondents, in order to ensure that the sample was reasonably representative. In the present section, answers to the interviews will be analysed one after the other, in the order they appear in the interview schedule (cf. schedule in Appendix A).

### 1. First language

**Table 1 – What is your first language? (N = 35)**

	Inuktitut		English		French	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
-30 years old	8	8	--	--	--	--
30-49 years old	3	7	2	--	--	--
50+ years old	4	3	--	--	--	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>--</b>	

Thirty-three, out of 35 respondents state that they have Inuktitut as their first language. The two remaining ones are English first language speakers (though being of [part-]Inuit ancestry), but they have learned Inuktitut as adults, either because of an Inuit marriage partner or in order to be able to transmit their ancestral language to their children. This may be an instance of *cyclical revitalisation*, when a language is not learned during the early years of speakers, but later on in their life, when they realise that it is part of their identity.

### 2. Second languages

**Table 2 – What is your second language? (N = 35)**

	Inuktitut		English		French		Monolingual	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
-30 years old	--	--	7	7	--	--	--	--
30-49 years old	2	--	5	7	[1]	--	--	--
50+ years old	--	--	2	--	--	--	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>28</b>		<b>[1]</b>	<b>[3<sup>rd</sup> language]</b>	<b>5</b>	

Twenty-eight respondents out of 35 interviewees say that English is their second language. They learned it at school, by watching television, from their bilingual parents, at work (in a mine or outside Nunavut), through friends and, for some, during a long hospital stay. Younger people officially started learning English at the end of Grade 3, but the language of the Qallunaat was

part of their environment well before that. Interestingly, some older people mention another dialect of Inuktitut as their second language (this does not appear in Table 2). One respondent is trilingual, having learned French from his paternal French Canadian family.

### 3. Education

**Table 3 – Level of formal education by gender (N = 27)**

	Male	Female
Elementary	1	--
Secondary not completed	6	8
Secondary completed	3	4
College and other	3	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>

Those who never went to school (plus a few others) did not answer the question. It may be seen that among those who responded, the level of formal education is quite similar for men and women. Some individuals originally from Igloodik or Kimmirut did not complete high school because at the time they were students, schooling stopped at Grade 9 in their community.

#### 3.1 Learning Inuktitut

**Table 4 – Were you taught Inuktitut at school? (N = 24)**

	Yes		No		Some	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
-30 years old	4	5	--	--	--	4
30-49 years old	4	2	--	2	--	2
50+ years old	--	--	1	--	--	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>6</b>	

More than half of the respondents say that they were taught Inuktitut at school. An older man insists that he did *not* learn his native language at school, because it was forbidden to speak it. Women seem a little less prone than men to assert that they learned Inuktitut in school. Six of them state that they were taught some Inuktitut – presumably reading and writing – but that they have forgotten what they learned, or that the presence of English interfered with learning their native language. Some mention that the absence of qualified teachers of Inuktitut explains their lack of interest in learning that language at school. Here are some excerpts from interviews:

I enrolled in Inuktitut classes, but I gave up because at first, there were no Inuktitut teachers; and the next time, there were teachers, but they were not showing up. So that is why I gave up and started taking French (21 year old woman).

Yes we were taught in Inuktitut while I was learning. I was learning to write it too (21 year old woman, originally from Igloodik).

When I was going to school at the Nakasuk, I learned in Inuktitut, but these days we are using too much of English. I've forgotten how to read and even write it (29 year old man).

We didn't learn it at Nakasuk school. Most of our teachers were Qallunaat (37 year old woman).

We'd only have short Inuktitut classes that were half an hour long, and that is when Inuktitut teachers were introduced around 1972. From that time on, there wouldn't always be Inuktitut teachers available (40 year old woman, originally from Kimmirut).

When I started school in Apex, we weren't allowed to speak in Inuktitut (59 year old man).

### 3.2 Reading Inuktitut

<b>Table 5 – Do you read Inuktitut syllabics? (N = 33)</b>						
	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>		<b>With difficulty</b>	
	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>
-30 years old	2	7	2	1	2	--
30-49 years old	3	5	2	--	1	1
50+ years old	4	3	--	--	--	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>		<b>5</b>		<b>4</b>	

Three quarters of respondents (15 women and 9 men) state that they are able to read Inuktitut syllabics. This includes all respondents 50 years old and over, though some of these (as well as some younger persons) cannot read finals (diacritic symbols).

Among younger (under 30) respondents, most women are able to read in Inuktitut. This might be because it is generally them who help children with their homework. Syllabics seem more of a problem for men, who may be chiefly involved in traditional or technical occupations, or who may have lost their interest for written Inuktitut when they entered secondary school. Interestingly enough, a respondent in his forties asserts that he re-learned to read Inuktitut when he became a member of a hunters and trappers committee. This might be another example of *cyclical revitalisation*:

Yes I could read in Inuktitut but if they have too many finals, I really can't understand them (21 year old woman, originally from Igloolik).

When I was a little kid, I knew how [to read], but not anymore (30 year old man).

I can read and write in both [syllabics and Roman orthography] (38 year old woman, originally from Igloolik).

No, I didn't have the Inuktitut subject [...]. Yes, I read it and can speak it. I couldn't read it before, but I can read a lot more [now]. I am a member of the Amaruq Hunters and Trappers Committee and they speak mostly in Inuktitut, so I learned through there (45 year old man).

All interviewees 50 years and older can read syllabics, a skill they learned informally (by perusing the Inuktitut Bible for instance). Some cannot read the finals, which they consider a novelty:

We weren't allowed to speak in Inuktitut [at school] as we were being taught in English. But I am able to read and write in syllabics (59 year old man).

I don't write the modern way. I write the real Inuktitut way. I write mine without finals. I consider that the real way (77 year old man).

### 3.3 Writing Inuktitut

<b>Table 6 – Do you write Inuktitut syllabics? (N = 31)</b>						
	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>		<b>With difficulty</b>	
	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>
-30 years old	4	5	3	1	--	--
30-49 years old	3	3	2	1	1	1
50+ years old	2	3	2	--	--	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>		<b>9</b>		<b>2</b>	

Twenty respondents out of 31 who answered the question say they are able to write in Inuktitut syllabics. Two more can write with difficulty. This means that 71% of the sample know how to use syllabics, a fairly good percentage.

Among respondents under 30 years of age, figures concerning reading and writing in Inuktitut are quite similar: 9 out of 14 are able to read, and 9 out of 13 can write syllabics. This may sound surprising, because writing seems more difficult than reading. It is quite possible that some people belonging to this age group are Nunavut Arctic College (NAC) students, and most of the younger respondents probably learned to read and write Inuktitut in elementary school.

Among those between 30 and 49, only 6 individuals out of 11 (54%) are fluent writers of syllabics (8 out of 12 are fluent readers), A majority of these people probably went to school at a time when English was the only language used in the classroom. Here are some statements:

I can say I do a good job writing Inuktitut (21 year old woman).

Yes, I can write in both *qaliujaaqpait* [Roman orthography] and *qaniujaaqpait* [syllabics] (22 year old man, NAC student).

Maybe [I can write] my name. That's it (30 year old man).

Yes I can write it, but not very good (36 year old man).

I can read a little bit. I don't write it that well (37 year old woman).

No [I don't write]. I can only write my name (45 year old man).

Among older respondents, 5 (including all of the women) out of 7 state that they can write syllabics. The two who don't attribute it to their age (problems with their vision and manual dexterity) rather than to any lack of knowledge:

Yes [I write], but I'm old fashioned. I can only write the old fashioned way, without the finals, not the modern way (68 year old woman).

I can write it but I don't really know how to use the finals (59 year old man).

### 3.4 Reading English

**Table 7 – Do you read English? (N = 29)**

	Yes		No		With difficulty	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
-30 years old	6	6	--	--	--	1
30-49 years old	6	6	--	--	--	--
50+ years old	2	--	1	1	--	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>1</b>	

Almost 90% of respondents to this question, including two elders, say they are able to read English. The only two persons who don't are over 50 years of age, but three elders did not answer the question. This means, however, that among people under 50, the proportion of fluent readers of English (24/25: 96%) is much higher than the percentage of those who read Inuktitut fluently (17/26: 65%).

### 4. Language used at home

When asked what language they generally speak at home, 47% of the sample (15/32) say they use mostly Inuktitut. Another 31% (10/32) use both Inuktitut and English. And finally, 22%



of respondents (7/32) state they speak mostly English at home.

Respondents under 30 appear to aim at balancing both languages. Some of them say they are aware that it is important to transmit their ancestral language to their children, and they make a special effort to speak it, even if children often – or always – answer in English. Individuals with a Qallunaaq spouse use more English than Inuktitut at home, but linguistic interaction (such as visits by the Inuk spouse's family and friends) may also occur in Inuktitut. Generally speaking, respondents originally from Igloolik or Kimmirut use more Inuktitut at home than those who have always lived in Iqaluit:

We hear English everywhere, we hear it on TV, radio... the stuff we like to listen to are always in Inuktitut, and our friends are only speaking in English. [...] Today we sometimes speak in English, but we always try to speak mostly in Inuktitut (23 year old man).

In English, because my spouse is a Qallunaaq, although he is able to understand a little bit in Inuktitut. If the phone rings and it's for me, I'll talk in Inuktitut (39 year old woman).

When at home, I will talk in Inuktitut and English, at times I will talk more in English or talk more in Inuktitut. I talk to my children in both languages and I don't know why I do that (43 year old man).

We mainly speak in Inuktitut (41 year old woman, originally from Kimmirut).

Many people do not seem conscious of the fact they address their children in a kind of mixed *Inuktitenglish*. And these children probably do not realise they speak two languages. Older respondents – whose home language is always Inuktitut – perceive a real slowing down in the use of that language by their grandchildren and other youngsters, and they adopt a fatalistic tone when speaking about the future of Inuktitut. The next two quotations show that the generation gap often entails communication problems:

My granddaughter, she is not speaking Inuktitut when she should be speaking it. Some of my children are like that. When they should be speaking in Inuktitut, they can't get the hang of it because they don't feel comfortable with it (85 year old man).

I speak only in Inuktitut at home, but one of my daughters and one of my grandchildren will speak to me in English and I'm able to partly understand them. I even say that although I'm a grandmother, some of my grandchildren will say something to me in English. I'm glad I can understand what they are saying. We can actually learn something even when we get older. The reason is that because we constantly hear English being spoken, we are able to pick it up. I can say for myself that I'm learning what I listen to (68 year old woman).

The contrast in attitude between these two elderly respondents might stem from the gendered division of labour, which brought women to be nearer to youngsters and provide to their needs. Male hunters had probably less chances to interact with anglophone personnel at school or at the nursing station on behalf of their children. The second quotation seems to support the opinion of some specialists, who believe that mutual understanding between generations – whatever the way it is done – is more important than the preservation of the Aboriginal language. Some young speakers refuse to speak their ancestral idiom in the presence of monolingual elders, because they think that they do not possess the necessary qualifications to use it correctly. As far as the transmission of culture is concerned, such a breach of communication between generations is worse than the loss of the traditional language would be. Some cultural values can indeed be transmitted through a medium other than the ancestral language, or they can be passed on through media other than speech, but if there is no communication at all, they risk dying out.

#### **4.1 Language used at home: has it changed over the last few years?**

For most respondents, the major change over the last few years has been that children are using more English, both among themselves and with persons of other generations. Even when addressed in Inuktitut, school age children answer in English. This seems due to the fact that an increasing number of Qallunaat live in Iqaluit, and that most media of communication (television – including APTN – newspapers, etc.) are in English:

English has a tremendous effect on us, because we'll talk to the kids in Inuktitut but they'll turn around and respond to us in English (41 year old woman).

Although I try and speak Inuktitut at home, my child who is 5 years old answers me in English when I speak to him in Inuktitut (42 year old woman).

There are too many people in our community. There are a lot of people mainly speaking in English and more children are speaking in English, and there are so many white people; also, the television programs are always in English (59 year old man).

Older respondents mention some instances of linguistic crumbling (long words are often shortened; personal names are cut off), as well as the occurrence of a language mixture between Inuktitut and English. This contributes stigmatising the speech of young people:

Some words that are spoken seem to be incomplete and some have been shortened. For example, [they say] *anaan*, when it's supposed to be *anaana*. There is also a mixture of Inuktitut and English spoken at times (42 year old woman).

By contrast, some respondents – mainly among those aged 50 and over or originating from Igloodik or Kimmirut – assert that they are not conscious of any change concerning language usage at home. It should be mentioned that out of deference, most speakers from all generations speak Inuktitut when an elder is present:

When I'm talking with an elder, I speak in Inuktitut (29 year old man).

#### **4.2 Language used at home: will it change in the future?**

As mentioned above, some respondents say that they do not perceive any significant change concerning linguistic usage at home. Some others would like to see the use of Inuktitut increase in their home, and they make special efforts to address their children in their mother tongue. This seems to be a relatively new tendency among parents under 30 years of age. These respondents assert that they use English when shopping or visiting administrative offices, but that in an informal context, they speak Inuktitut to their children. Others believe that children should be given sufficient time to learn Inuktitut, acquiring a language being a lifelong task. Older respondents are more critical toward the young, because, they believe, the morphology and semantics of Inuktitut are changing, particularly in a urban setting like Iqaluit where English has become the *lingua franca*, the only language understood by everyone. This has a perverse effect on the attitudes of the young concerning their own linguistic competence:

Yes, my mother speaks to me in Inuktitut now, so my speech is improving (19 year old woman).

My youngest [child] is too young [to talk], he is only 6 months old, [but] we always speak in Inuktitut to the two older ones (23 year old woman).

I want to pass it on to my son, so we are starting to speak in Inuktitut more often, and we also speak in English (27 year old woman).

So, there is potential for it [language usage] to change over time. I guess that when they're a little

older and understand better, they [children] will be more fluent [in Inuktitut] (28 year old man).

We are speaking more in English now, even at home. It seems that I am not speaking properly anymore (41 year old woman).

## 5. Language in the workplace

**Table 8 – Employment statistics (N = 35)**

	Employed		Unemployed		Traditional	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
-30 years old	4	4	4	4	--	--
30-49 years old	2	7	3	--	--	--
50+ years old	--	--	4	1	--	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>		<b>16</b>		<b>2</b>	

Seventeen respondents out of 29 individuals under 65 years of age (59%) have a job and twelve (41%) say they are unemployed. Only two elderly women define themselves as practitioners of traditional subsistence activities.

Among the 17 employed respondents, 7 (41%) say they always speak English in the workplace, and 9 (53%) use both English and Inuktitut (the answer of one respondent is unclear). Language choice at work depends for a large part on the specific place where one is employed, on the ethnic origin of staff, and on the topic under discussion. When selling things, as well as when Qallunaat (who often detain a position of authority) are present, English is almost always used. Some respondents state that Inuktitut is difficult to understand on the telephone, and when one tries to explain details about administration and bureaucracy. Respondents originally from Igloolik or Kimmirut appear to use more Inuktitut at work, and they perceive Iqaluit as a strongly bilingual community which operates along "Qallunaat ways":

I noticed that we mostly spoke in Inuktitut [back in Igloolik]. They are my fellow Inuit and I would ask them what they want to buy in Inuktitut. They would say [the name of] that particular item in English but afterwards, we would start to speak in Inuktitut (21 year old woman, originally from Igloolik).

I speak in Inuktitut, but if one was from Igloolik, one will keep on talking in Inuktitut, but if one was to live here, one will speak more in English (42 year old woman, originally from Igloolik).

For some respondents, understanding clearly is more important than insisting on using Inuktitut, especially in the workplace:

At work, I used to talk more in English for it is easier to work in: everybody understands the language, and they understand more. When talking in Inuktitut, at times, nobody understands what you are saying (43 year old man).

The degree of bilingualism seems higher for Inuit holding top positions in the government:

When I'm working, I speak in Inuktitut when there is somebody that needs services, like if somebody calls and asks a question, but we speak mostly in English (28 year old man working for Northern Affairs).

I use both languages. Some of the MLAs come to me, but only the ones that aren't able to speak in English; so, I use both [languages] at work (39 year old woman working at the Legislative Assembly).

### **5.1 Language in the workplace: will it change in the future?**

Some respondents assert that there has been an increase in the use of Inuktitut at work since the advent of Nunavut, especially where jobs in the new government are concerned. But some others have doubts about the efficacy of Nunavut's language policies. Promoting Inuktitut would chiefly be a way to increase the political capital of politicians. Some respondents believe, though, that ideally, Inuktitut will be more present when Inuit occupy higher positions in the job market:

Yes, ever since the advent of Nunavut, Inuktitut is used a lot more here (45 year old man).

At work, we are encouraged to try to speak in Inuktitut, so we could speak it more often (27 year old woman).

They say it has changed a lot, [though] I know that they spoke only in Inuktitut, but now they are more speaking in English (22 year old woman).

Finally, one respondent states that the principal change is that several Qallunaat have started to use some Inuktitut (mostly greetings), and that efforts should be made to help them continuing in that direction:

It has now changed, we are now talking more in Inuktitut, the younger generation that is. Before, when Inuit started working, there used to be more Qallunaat than Inuit at work. Now, even when there are Qallunaat working with the Inuit, the Qallunaat can understand a little bit of Inuktitut, and that seems to have changed: Qallunaat are understanding more Inuktitut now (42 year old woman).

## **6. The language of public life**

### **6.1 The language of administration**

When asked which language they generally speak when visiting administrative offices, most respondents refer to linguistic interaction: English would be used when Qallunaat are present, and Inuktitut when there are only Inuit. But it seems that even if people wish to hear more Inuktitut in the administration, there is a strong tendency to speak English where government services are concerned: 21 respondents out of 32 (65%) say they use only or mostly English when visiting administrative offices:

English. Most people won't understand me if I speak in Inuktitut (23 year old woman).

When I'm visiting administration offices or stores, I speak more English than Inuktitut (44 year old man).

If it's a Qallunaaq, I speak in English and when it's an Inuk, I speak in Inuktitut. But when I realise that they don't understand in Inuktitut, I use English (22 year old woman).

When it's an Inuk I speak in Inuktitut and when it's a Qallunaaq I speak in English. But I always try to answer in Inuktitut, even if it is a Qallunaaq I am speaking with. So, instead of saying "yes", I say "ii", because they have to learn. So, in some cases, I speak in Inuktitut to Qallunaat (44 year old woman, originally from Kimmirut).

Some respondents speak in Inuktitut to Qallunaat (greetings, "yes" and "no"), elders and Inuit from elsewhere. Symmetrically, some elders answer in Inuktitut when Qallunaat address them in English:

If you can't speak in the Inuktitut language, you shouldn't work for the Nunavut Government. When I go to a government building, I'll just talk in Inuktitut whether the person is an Inuk or not (59 year old man).

I'll speak in Inuktitut. There are some Qallunaat that will speak to you in English, and I'm starting to

do the same thing to them by speaking in Inuktitut (74 year old woman).

## **6.2 The language of business**

Nine respondents out of 29 (31%) say they always speak English when shopping. The balance generally use both Inuktitut and English, except, of course, for the older, monolingual respondents. It seems that in most cases, language choice depends on the context (location, individuals whom one addresses, topic discussed):

Most of our cashiers are Inuit, but I also see Qallunaat at the store (24 year old woman).

When the person is a Qallunaaq, I'll speak in English, and if the person is an Inuk, I'll speak in Inuktitut (22 year old woman).

Those over 50 clearly make an unconditional use of Inuktitut, which functions as a marker of the ethnic boundary between Inuit and Qallunaat:

When I take a taxi, a Qallunaaq [driver] will ask me in English and I will answer in Inuktitut. They don't give a thought that I can't speak in English. They just keep talking to me in English, so in retaliation I'll answer them in Inuktitut (73 year old woman).

There are occasions when there are no Inuit around. Everything is labelled in English. [But] I'm able to go to the bank; even though they are all Qallunaat, I get serviced (68 year old woman).

## **6.3 Language at school**

A third of all respondents say that Inuktitut is always used when they visit school or when their children are in the classroom:

My 5 years old is going to school now and the teacher is an Inuk. He is only learning in Inuktitut (22 year old woman).

They all have Inuktitut subjects and I'm very proud of them because they are learning in Inuktitut (43 year old man).

The use of Inuktitut appears as more intensive in the lower elementary grades, but when students become teenagers, they have more and more problems using their mother tongue to communicate, especially when their conversation has to deal with contemporary life. Because after Grades 3 or 4 they have been taught exclusively in English about the world within which they live, it is very difficult or even impossible for them to express clear ideas in Inuktitut about that world. This is compounded by a degree of diffidence, especially among girls, concerning their competence in Inuktitut, which they deem rather low:

My daughter goes to school, but she's taking English classes. They do have Inuktitut classes. but I think she finds it hard, so she's not working on it (29 year old man).

My daughter didn't really have Inuktitut classes. She finished Grade 12 in English. Although she tries to learn Inuktitut, she can be a bit shy about it, although she understands it. She's gone down South for further education. She understands a bit but she's shy to speak it (44 year old woman).

Those among respondents who are still in school say they use English, because it is more polyvalent than Inuktitut as far as expressing modernity is concerned:

As English is my second language, and looking at these technical words at school, I always learn from them and I understand them [technical English words] better; it helps me and they are very useful (44 year old woman, student at Nunavut Arctic College).

#### **6.4 Language at school: has it changed over the last few years?**

Seven respondents out of 29 (24%) say they have not witnessed any recent change in the use of Inuktitut at school, but 17 of them (59%) have indeed noticed changes. According to the latter, children now use more English than they did a few years ago, and this not only at school, but anywhere in town:

I can see and hear kids playing outside and they are talking more in English now than before. It is all in *Qallunaatitut* [English] now, although it is Inuit who are speaking. It is shocking to see (23 year old woman).

The kids today only speak in English (27 year old woman).

I believe that [campaigns of] awareness of using the Inuktitut language are being organised because of the fact that Inuit are starting to speak less of the language. There are even adults speaking more in English to their friends, relatives and children. They seem to find it easier (73 year old woman).

For some elders, the principal change concerning the school language is that various dialects of Inuktitut are being introduced by teachers from different areas of Nunavut:

The now have [Inuit] teachers, but most are from the outside. They have their own dialects, so they are learning more of other dialects and not from the Tasiujarjuaq area (74 year old woman).

#### **6.5 Language at school: do you expect changes in the future?**

Generally speaking, two tendencies can be found in the answers of the respondents: idealistic and realistic. Some respond about what they would wish to see happen, and others – or the same people, later on in their response – about what is really happening. On the ideal side, respondents mention their desire to see the visibility of Inuktitut increase at school, to have Inuit being given priority when teachers are hired, that more documents be published in Inuktitut, and – this goes far beyond school language! – to be able to continue eating country food:

To be able to speak and write, I feel it [teaching in Inuktitut] should be more concentrated, and hopefully, they'll influence the kids into speaking their mother tongue more (28 year old man).

To hire more Inuktitut speakers [at school] (44 year old woman).

I really want Inuit to talk more Inuktitut, because of the fact that we are Inuit, precious Inuit. Although we have houses like *Qallunaat* now, we aren't going to stop being Inuit and we won't stop eating our food. We, the ones who are older, have to eat our own kind of food, make our own bannock, but these days it's different... My children will eat country food because they are following me as an example, but it's not always the same with others (68 year old woman).

At a realistic level, which extends beyond the school, respondents notice that the use of English is increasing, and that it will continue to increase over the coming years. This tendency is compounded by strong cultural influences from the South (Internet, television, etc.), that the respondents call the "*Qallunaat* ways." A young woman even asserts that English is more useful than Inuktitut to protect Inuit culture and to make a decent living in the North:

Yes, I believe it's going to change. We are using more *Qallunaat* ways these days, and we also learn from watching television (43 year old woman).

Nobody makes changes now, so I don't expect there will be changes, but someone's got to go there [in the school] and make a by-law concerning the workforce [in order to hire more Inuit] (28 year old man).

When he [her son] learns to speak in English, and when he is able to speak that language, maybe it

will change (22 year old woman).

Older respondents wish that new Inuktitut words be coined in order to describe modernity without having to borrow English terms. They would also like to see more documents translated into Inuktitut:

I would expect it to change because some of them [modern concepts] have no name in Inuktitut. Things like knives, pocket knives, we do have terms for them, but *palaugaq* [flour] is in English, as is *tii* for "tea" (85 year old man).

## 7. Language and the creation of Nunavut

**Table 9 – Have you noticed language change in your community since 1999? (N = 33)**

	Yes		No		Some	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
-30 years old	2	3	4	3	1	2
30-49 years old	3	3	2	2	--	1
50+ years old	4	2	--	1	--	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>		<b>12</b>		<b>4</b>	

The sample is divided into two roughly equal opinions: 17/33 respondents say they have noticed changes in language use in their community since the advent of Nunavut, while 16/33 have not really witnessed modifications (12 cases), or have just noticed some change (4 cases). Respondents under 50 mention that one major change is that diverging dialects are starting to converge toward one central form of speech, that of Iqaluit. They have also observed that Inuktitut has become more visible in the community, even if English is increasingly important too (on public notice boards for instance). Some speak about an important immigration of Qallunaat workers (mainly Francophones) since 1999. Curiously enough, while several respondents say that English is increasingly spoken at home, others (or even the same: cf. the second quotation below) have noticed a recrudescence of Inuktitut:

Yes, I know that they have to translate everything that is in English into Inuktitut. I now see written Inuktitut; it used to be all English before (24 year old woman).

At home, Inuit are now talking more in English. Actually, they will be talking in Inuktitut, but they will put English words here and there. I don't understand that, even if myself, I talk that way too. Since the advent of Nunavut, I believe we are talking more in Inuktitut now. Before Nunavut came to existence, we were talking more in English (43 year old man).

There are more French people since we got Nunavut (37 year old woman).

It is so changed that some are actually speaking different dialects, maybe because too many different people from different places are in one place now (21 year old woman, originally from Igloolik).

Respondents of childbearing age seem particularly conscious about their predominant role in preserving Inuktitut. This might mean that the creation of Nunavut has facilitated the occurrence of a nationalistic awareness, which puts Inuit culture and language in the forefront:

It was said on the radio that the language was decreasing; so, we have to hold on to it. It is not under government care. It is us, the parents, who are responsible to keep it from getting lost (45 year old man).

I have noticed that people who don't know how to speak Inuktitut are ashamed of themselves for not

being able to talk (22 year old man).

Some respondents originally from Igloolik or Kimmirut, where the usage of Inuktitut is stronger, do not see any significant change there:

I don't think there has been a big change in my community, but I believe that it's going to change slowly, although I'm really not sure how much it's going to change (36 year old man, originally from Kimmirut).

I wouldn't say there have been changes. When looking at Iqaluit, it is not the same as in Kimmirut or Kinngait. Where I'm originally from, Kimmirut, it is much smaller and they are more Inuktitut speaking, whereas here in Iqaluit, they are more English speaking. That is where there is a difference (40 year old woman, originally from Kimmirut).

Finally, respondents aged 50 and over generally respond in an elaborate way. They stress various aspects of the language situation under Nunavut, including dialectal variation, false electoral promises and some semantic points:

There are more dialects now, so we don't understand. We are starting to pick up various dialects that are not our own (59 year old man).

Inuit are still unemployed, even if when they [politicians] were campaigning on Nunavut, they did say that Inuit would be the majority to get jobs. This has not happened yet. It seems that they were just teasing us to get votes. [...] Even though we have Nunavut, [considering] the things that have to be dealt with in English, computer skills for example, it is only if you speak English and Inuktitut well that you are able to get good jobs. Those who have the skills and knowledge [but do not speak English] are not being chosen, because their skills are not taken into consideration even if it is so easy to learn your skills on the spot, like we did (74 year old woman).

Everyone in the world has claim to it [Nunavut]. Things like "we are" [the ending *-vut* in "Nunavut"] mean that [it is] for everyone (78 year old man).

## 7.1 Language and the creation of Nunavut: expected changes

**Table 10 – Do you expect language change in your community in the future? (N = 28)**

	Yes		No		Hopefully		Maybe / don't know	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
-30 years old	3	4	1	1	2	--	1	1
30-49 years old	1	2	1	--	--	2	1	1
50+ years old	3	2	--	--	1	--	--	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>5</b>		<b>5</b>	

Fifteen respondents out of 29 (53%) think that the establishment of Nunavut will be the source of language change in the future. Five more hope so, for a total of 20 individuals (69% of the sample) who are expecting change. Among respondents under 50 years of age, the principal change anticipated is subtractive bilingualism, which causes the Aboriginal language to deteriorate when one learns English. Respondents also mention dialectal convergence: in the future, only one dialect will be used in Nunavut. The most positive change, mentioned by several individuals, is that an increase in the level of formal education should entail the emergence of a local and regional elite fluent in both Inuktitut and English:

I believe the people of Nunavut will have one dialect, maybe that's how it would change (30 year old man).

I think it is going to keep changing. Maybe we will be speaking in English; or in Inuktitut, but very



broken into a mixture of both Inuktitut and English. It's already like that now, but maybe [it'll get] worse (21 year old woman).

Maybe [it will change] a little bit. Kids are watching more T.V. and the shows they put on are mostly in English, so the way they [kids] speak is probably going to change (36 year old man).

Maybe not in Iqaluit [an increase of English] because we speak it [English] a lot more. Due to my job, I travel a lot and I have noticed that when I am in a smaller community, they speak a lot more in Inuktitut. In smaller communities, there aren't that many Qallunaat as we have in Iqaluit. (28 year old man).

There are a lot of people that I know who want to learn how to speak in Inuktitut, and some are confused. Although they could speak in Inuktitut, they are just speaking in English (22 year old man).

I don't think it will be that strong [Inuktitut]. Maybe if Inuit take more studies, it will change (37 year old man).

Respondents aged 50 and over chiefly discuss the increasing Inuktitut competence gap between the young and the old. Some also mention the language difference between employers who are Qallunaat, and their Inuit employees and customers:

Language is changing but for myself, I understand my daughter's way of talking. What she is using now, I understand it. It is fine that way, although it is the other way around [in comparison with the "correct" way of speaking Inuktitut]. But for her, it's fine (59 year old man).

These days, they are speaking mostly in English. It is apparent that there will be less Inuktitut spoken. It will have to change, as the elders won't always be here. Looking at the Western Arctic, the Inuvialuit are speaking mostly in English. It seems it will be the same here, although there is an effort to maintain the language. But it is starting to disappear (68 year old woman).

Yes, I think it will change as our younger generation, even though Inuit, will keep on changing. I think that Inuktitut will fade. Teenagers now are just speaking English when they are together. This will keep happening later on. Later on, there will hardly be anyone speaking Inuktitut (77 year old man).

## 8. Language choice when discussing various topics

In order to understand the actual usage of Inuktitut and English in Nunavut, respondents were asked their language(s) of preference when expressing or discussing various topics.

### 8.1 Expressing feelings

**Table 11 – What language is easier for expressing your feelings? (N = 35)**

	Inuktitut		English		Both	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
-30 years old	2	1	5	5	1	2
30-49 years old	1	4	3	3	1	--
50+ years old	3	3	--	--	1	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>		<b>16</b>		<b>5</b>	

Results are particularly interesting here. Almost half (45.5%; 16/35) of respondents state that it is easier for them to express their feelings in English. If those who use both languages are added to that number, this leaves us with 60% of respondents who speak in English at least part of the time when expressing their emotions.

English users are more numerous among those under 30 years of age. It seems that for them, the language of the Qallunaat is considered more direct, more transparent in its meaning when it comes to expressing feelings, while Inuktitut is recognised as less direct, more reflective, more apt at expressing cultural statements than it is at speaking about one's emotions:

When I have a problem, I talk about it in Inuktitut, and when I'm having trouble getting across, I explain it in English, and then I talk about it in Inuktitut again (26 year old man).

Expressing them [feelings] in Inuktitut, I know that they are understanding what I'm saying, and the people I'm talking to are my fellow Inuit (23 year old woman).

I have found myself when I would be talking to a group that I have a tendency to speak in Inuktitut first, then after that I could clearly talk about it in English. I speak in Inuktitut first, and then in English, because when I do that my mind slows down. When I talk about my thoughts in English first, my mind starts to run and I get lost in my words, then they don't make much sense in my mind. So, I switch to Inuktitut because it makes me think slower, so that's why I have a tendency to speak in Inuktitut to a group before speaking in English (22 year old man).

Half of the 12 respondents aged between 30 and 49 say they use only or mostly English when expressing their feelings. But – and this also stands true for younger respondents – there is a difference between expressing and describing a feeling or emotion. This might mean that when people say they use mostly English, it would be for describing what they feel rather than expressing it spontaneously:

I speak in Inuktitut because I know the words better. I have more knowledge in it, so I speak more in Inuktitut (36 year old man, originally from Kimmirut).

I'm much slower in Inuktitut, so I'm able to express myself faster in English, so I have a tendency to express myself in English (42 year old woman).

I feel more comfortable with English because I understand it better. Maybe within the last five years I've been speaking more in Inuktitut, I'm only starting to get it back again (45 year old man).

Unsurprisingly, respondents aged 50 and over prefer Inuktitut for expressing their feelings, except for the youngest among them (a 59 year old man), who uses English also:

I think Inuktitut is better because it's the only language I ever learned to speak growing up (68 year old woman).

Yes, I would say Inuktitut. Even if I happen to have an interpreter, I can only answer in Inuktitut, even to a Qallunaat (85 year old man).

Either one I guess. To express what I'm feeling, sometimes it seems easier to speak in English, and some of the time in Inuktitut, but when I'm using the Inuktitut language, it seems to take longer, so I will quickly say it in English (59 year old man).

## **8.2 Talking about land and subsistence activities**

Among the youngest group of respondents, 6 out of 11 use (or would use) Inuktitut for talking about subsistence activities and questions concerning land, 2 English, and 3 both languages according to the topic under discussion:

[Concerning land activities] I speak in Inuktitut (28 year old man).

I use both English and Inuktitut (22 year old woman).

Well, to talk about that, I think I would be better at it in English. I don't know much about stuff like animal parts in Inuktitut. To talk about the land, I could talk about that both in Inuktitut and in

English, but by-laws and stuff, I could talk about them in English without struggling. If I had to explain them in Inuktitut, I could also do that (22 year old man).

Respondents 30 and over use more Inuktitut than English, except for males between 30 and 49, 4 of which (out of 6) say they talk about land activities in English. This seems surprising, especially in view of the fact that even a majority of younger speakers prefer Inuktitut when it comes to discussing subsistence:

As we are living in the land of the Inuit, we should be talking more in Inuktitut, that I believe, as we would understand each other, as we are using one language. But as there are more Qallunaat here, we are speaking more English (45 year old man).

For land activities, I'd probably use Inuktitut (43 year old woman).

Inuktitut, for it is easier and you can understand more in Inuktitut, but when I cannot remember an Inuktitut word, then I start speaking in English (43 year old woman).

### **8.3 Language and home activities**

Out of 27 individuals who answered this question, 19 (70%), including 6 out of 8 respondents under 30, say they only or mostly use Inuktitut at home. Only 2 individuals use principally English to talk about activities conducted at home. Many young respondents say they make a special effort to address their children in Inuktitut. Some say that speaking one's mother tongue at home is a source of happiness, which shows that the symbolic value of Inuktitut is higher than that of English. A number of respondents resort to code switching when speaking about a domestic utensil whose Inuktitut name they do not know, or when they want to explain specific concepts linked to home activities:

Majority of the time, I speak to her [her daughter] in Inuktitut. That is what I do, and she can speak a lot of Inuktitut now, and I know I am doing a good job (21 year old woman).

We only speak in Inuktitut (23 year old woman).

Both Inuktitut and English, and sometimes I mix them when I'm talking, so I could be understood clearly (24 year old woman).

Here, I just feel like I'm at home. Here I'm getting help and people are always speaking in Inuktitut. I really feel comfortable (29 year old woman).

In English. But we try, between myself and my partner, we try and speak in Inuktitut as clearly as possible to get discussion going at home with the kids, so that they would have better understanding, to try and get the best out of the two worlds I guess (29 year old man).

Inuktitut, for it is easier and you can understand more in Inuktitut, but when I can't remember an Inuktitut word, then I start speaking in English (41 year old woman).

In my home? Inuktitut. The things that are around the house that we are able to say in Inuktitut we will use the terms in Inuktitut. There are also new things that we don't have terms for because we've never had them before. We try to have names for the things we have now (68 year old woman).

### **8.4 Language and school activities**

This question was understood differently by different people. Some answers concern the language used for talking *about* school, while other responses deal with the language used *at* school by respondents or their children. Parents are conscious of the usefulness of English for discussing subjects like science or biology, but those with children of elementary school age want them to be taught Inuktitut in the classroom. For parents with teenagers, it seems that

understanding what is taught, in whichever language, has priority over using their mother tongue. Finally, one respondent mentions that in Iqaluit, dialects might be tending toward uniformity:

When I was in high school, I was always speaking in English, because subjects like biology and chemistry are not translated into Inuktitut at all, and there are so many concepts that don't exist in Inuktitut because nobody has ever created words for them, and that's too bad (22 year old man).

I was raised in Igloolik, but we lived here most of the time. When I go back to Igloolik to our relatives, the dialect is different. My kids are in school here in Iqaluit and sometimes when they're talking, they use the South Baffin dialect, and at home when we are talking, they are like us, and when they are talking they add English (25 year old man).

There are some cases where you have to speak in English, such as talking about science (45 year old man).

If I was to talk about school with my children, I'd use Inuktitut when appropriate; if not then [I would use] English, just so they will understand more (59 year old man).

### **8.5 Language and labour**

Here again, the question was understood by some as dealing with the language they used when talking *about* work, and by others by the one they used *at* work. As already mentioned in section 5, many respondents answer that language choice is motivated by the person who is addressed – the boss is often a Qallunaaq and is addressed in English – or by the presence of non-Inuit. It is worth noticing that some respondents talk *about* their job in Inuktitut, but use mostly English *at* their workplace:

- R: I use a lot of English [at work].
- Q: Like just to talk about it [work] when you're not there?
- R: Oh! I talk about it in Inuktitut (29 year old man).

When it's a Qallunaaq, I speak in English and when it's an Inuk, I speak in Inuktitut (45 year old man).

I usually talk about my work in English, when I need to talk about it, but if I am talking to an Inuk, I could talk about it in Inuktitut, without switching (23 year old man).

There are more Qallunaat employed here at work, so we mainly hear English, although with fellow Inuit we'll speak in Inuktitut. If the person is a Qallunaaq, then we'll speak in English. As all the students here are Inuit and there is one Qallunaaq who understands Inuktitut, we speak in Inuktitut [with students] (42 year old woman, employed at Nunavut Arctic College).

### **8.6 Language and politics or administration**

Half of the respondents, most of them below 30 years of age, say they use mostly or only English when discussing Nunavut's administration and politics. Respondents over 50 answer more elaborately, often including in their response a discussion of traditional Inuit values. Younger people prefer English because of its fluidity and transparency when they have to explain and discuss specific points linked to politics and administration. According to several respondents, the Inuktitut translation of technical administrative concepts does not lead to a consensus and, thus, is not really useful:

I would understand it [administration and politics] more if it were in English (21 year old woman).

[I talk about administration and politics] only in English. But if it was needed to translate it into Inuktitut and if there is no Inuktitut term for it, we have to describe the word around [coin a term describing the meaning of the concept] (22 year old man).

I'd speak in Inuktitut. I try to speak more in Inuktitut (23 year old woman).

I would think it would be better if they, administrators, would speak only in Inuktitut, because they shouldn't all be speaking in English, since they are Inuit. If they could learn from each other, it would be better. They should put words together and not try to speak in English (77 year old man).

I don't really discuss politics and administration. What they are doing now is not making laws [the Inuit way]: they are using Qallunaat ways to make laws. They are making laws that are not really appropriate for northern living. For example, parents slapping their children, this is not right as an Inuk. The laws [permitting to slap your children] that they have now are inappropriate (78 year old man).

## 9. Practical usefulness of language choice

**Table 12 – What language is the most useful for earning a living in the North? (N = 33)**

	Inuktitut		English		Both / it depends	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
-30 years old	3	2	3	5	2	1
30-49 years old	2	2	2	3	1	1
50+ years old	2	2	1	--	1	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>		<b>14</b>		<b>6</b>	

Fourteen respondents out of 33 (42%) think that English is more useful than Inuktitut for earning a living in the North, and 6 more (18%) are of the opinion that both English and Inuktitut have a use. This leaves us with 40% of respondents, belonging to all three age groups – but proportionately more numerous among elders – who believe that Inuktitut is more useful than English in the contemporary North.

It seems that answers are linked to the personal situation of respondents. Many of them, whether employed or not, deem that fluency in English is essential for finding a rewarding job, hence the usefulness of that language. Other respondents however, who generally work for the Nunavut Government or at Nunavut Arctic College, or who moved to Iqaluit from a smaller community, believe that Inuktitut is more useful than English:

It [usefulness] depends on whom you are working for (30 year old man).

I think Inuktitut is more useful. I believe that the Arctic belongs to the Inuit (21 year old woman, originally from Igloodik).

English. The majority of people at work are English. Like when I was working for Nunavut Tourism, I was the only one there who could speak Inuktitut, for they were all Qallunaat, and there was nobody to speak Inuktitut with (21 year old woman).

I would like to see Inuktitut, but the reality is that English is easier (21 year old woman).

Both [languages are useful]. To have the ability to speak two languages is an asset these days (39 year old woman).

There are Inuit who do not know how to speak English, and many Inuit who come from different communities come in without being able to speak English fluently. Although their Inuktitut language is strong, they are not getting hired for a job right away because they cannot speak English too well. Personally, I would want them to understand that people who are able to speak Inuktitut should be their priority (22 year old man).

Inuktitut, and it is better for me. As we work here, we are always dealing with Inuktitut material,

maybe the same as with other offices elsewhere, we deal with Inuit, and we teach in Inuktitut as well (42 year old woman, employed at Nunavut Arctic College).

Two thirds of respondents aged 50 and over say that Inuktitut is more useful than English for earning a living up North. Practitioners of traditional activities firmly believe that their mother tongue is irreplaceable when one lives in the Arctic: the language of the Inuit is, thus, linked with place and identity. Older respondents hint, however, at the unavoidable presence of English in a market economy, and at its utility for younger people. Some deplore, though, that the government does not give Inuktitut its due place, especially as written documents are concerned:

These days, there aren't many choices but to earn money. It seems that making money is what we revolve our lives around now, to buy food, clothing, other things such as hunting equipment, because there is so much use for them. There are some things that we've never known, never used back then, and that are now essential for us. We need to make a living now, so do our grandchildren and so on (68 year old woman).

The Inuktitut language is not being used in the government. The government operates on written documents, which are written in English, so we seem to have to talk in English to be understood by the government employees. Hand written documents in Inuktitut mean nothing to the government. It has to be typed and signed, with an address to whom it is going and from whom it comes (59 year old man).

In regard to earning money in the North, they are only looking for things that are written on paper. They can only earn money if they work. If they do not work, they will not earn any money (74 year old woman).

### 9.1 Perceived changes in the practical usefulness of language choice

**Table 13 – Over the last few years, did you notice changes concerning the usefulness of Inuktitut? (N = 30)**

	Yes		No		Maybe / don't know	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
-30 years old	4	5	3	1	1	--
30-49 years old	2	3	1	2	2	--
50+ years old	3	2	1	--	--	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>		<b>8</b>		<b>3</b>	

Nineteen out of 30 respondents who answered the question (63%) say they noticed changes in the usefulness of Inuktitut since the inception of Nunavut. Those who did not perceive any change or who do not really know are mostly men (8 out of 11 negative answers).

Many respondents under 50 notice that the labour market – whose importance has increased in Iqaluit after the town became the capital of Nunavut – is now more favourable to young Inuit, because they are bilingual in Inuktitut and English. Some also add that Inuktitut has become more visible, thanks to public investments in language programs, and that people are starting to be conscious of the practical importance of speaking Inuktitut in the North. But other respondents, perhaps more numerous, rather think that it is English whose usage has increased since Nunavut, thus lessening the usefulness of Inuktitut on the job market:

[It has changed] a lot. Since the advent of Nunavut, more Inuktitut speakers have jobs (30 year old man).

We are speaking more English now (38 year old woman).

Igloolik is my community. So, when I come here to Iqaluit, it's like as if I go down South (21 year old woman, originally from Igloolik).

I think that if you are able to speak in English, you will be able to get a job here in Iqaluit (28 year old man).

I never used to see many texts translated in Inuktitut, but after the advent of Nunavut, I now see more of them translated (24 year old woman).

Many more people are speaking in English, and also more Qallunaat are coming in, and they come much faster. So, it gets kind of tricky as to what more we can do with the Inuktitut language (22 year old man).

The Inuktitut language is starting to surface at a slow pace (40 year old man).

For respondents 50 and over, Inuktitut has remained the language of the North, but some of them deem that wage economy and the government – both of which operate primarily in English – are now making life easier, even if they contribute erasing a lifestyle that had been useful for thousands of years:

I never knew about the financial things. It is only recently that I have noticed the need for money. I know that if you are able to speak English, you will have no problem earning a living (77 year old man).

I think it should change for the better. In the beginning, God created two people and one of them committed a crime. God said to them that life would be very hard because of the crime they had committed. Right now, they seem to be saying that if you can't speak English, you should not even work. This is wrong, because they [Inuktitut monolinguals] are in good shape and able to do things. If you watch to see what a person is doing, you are able to figure out how to do it even if you are unable to speak in English (78 year old man).

## **9.2 Expected changes in the practical usefulness of language choice**

Some younger respondents, including students at Nunavut Arctic College, expect that an increase in education will help preserving Inuktitut. They seem eager too to restore intergenerational communication. Due to subtractive bilingualism – learning English has been detrimental to one's competence in Inuktitut – many young Inuit now have problems addressing elders. Younger respondents also expect the Government of Nunavut to promote Inuktitut intensively in the workplace and to translate texts into Inuktitut syllabics, even if an increasing number of Qallunaat are moving up North to find jobs:

After I finish my school, I'm going to change it [the language situation] (30 year old man).

We are Inuit, but I believe that more Qallunaat will start to arrive in the future so that we are going to live a lot like the Qallunaat ways (21 year old woman).

Yes, more Qallunaat coming in. It will change (18 year old man).

I believe we will continue to speak Inuktitut and not lose our Inuktitut language (43 year old man).

It can change if Inuit have more determination to teach in Inuktitut and if we are more proud of our Inuktitut language; if we learn more about it and are taught so much more by our parents and relatives (22 year old man).

I feel that the younger generation are not asking questions to the elders anymore (23 year old woman).

Older respondents realise that they might well be the last traditional Inuit, and they are

conscious about their role in preserving the language, even if the generation gap is slowly increasing:

Well, they [young people] are always around Qallunaat, and they are going to school where they also are around Qallunaat. Even when they don't go to school anymore, they are still using the English language. That is what is changing things (85 year old man).

## 10. Language and the outside world

**Table 14 – Which language is more useful for learning about the outside world? (N = 28)**

	Inuktitut		English		Both / it depends	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
-30 years old	--	2	7	4	--	1
30-49 years old	2	2	2	3	1	--
50+ years old	--	1	--	1	2	--
Total	7		17		4	

All male respondents under 30 assert that English is more useful than Inuktitut for learning about the outside world, while it is only the case with 4 women (out of 7) in the same age group. On the overall, 61% of respondents believe that English is a more useful learning medium. Those – mostly women – who believe that Inuktitut is better than English for inquiring about the outside world may be giving an idealistic answer, aimed at showing their opposition to the hegemony of the majority language:

Inuktitut [is more useful for learning], for we are Inuit (21 year old woman).

It would be nice if it was in Inuktitut. But the Qallunaat who are highly educated can't speak in Inuktitut. So, it is English (36 year old man).

I guess the best way for the kids to understand right... It's easier to explain things in English, I feel (28 year old man).

English, if they have a translation for it (40 year old woman).

Elders deem that they are perfectly able to learn by themselves without speaking English, though they also rely on the young to explain them what is going on in the outside world. This might be fertile ground for intergenerational communication, because interpreters are greatly valorised:

It is not just in English that you can learn about the outside world. You have eyes and ears, you are able to learn whatever is happening in the world. If you are unable to speak English and someone else is, you can get that person to do things for you (78 year old man).

Some respondents seem to have understood the question as dealing with the natural environment rather than with the world in general. In their answers, they stress the importance of one or the other language for learning about ecological concepts:

[I learn better] in English. If there are words that I have never heard before, like ozone layer or atmosphere, I do not know them in Inuktitut, I really don't (22 year old man).

The English terms [concerning environment] would be given and understood by the Inuit, then the Inuktitut term is changed. There will be some changes [in the Inuktitut lexicon] so that it will be easily understood by everyone (59 year old man).

Inuktitut would probably be better to learn about the stars and the clouds, because you can tell a lot by looking at the clouds. Even if it is calm, you can tell when it will be windy (74 year old woman).



### 10.1 Language and the outside world: perceptions of change

**Table 15 – Over the last few years, did you notice changes concerning the usefulness of Inuktitut for learning about the outside world? (N = 23)**

	Yes		No		Maybe / don't know	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
-30 years old	1	2	4	3	--	--
30-49 years old	1	1	1	2	3	1
50+ years old	1	3	--	--	--	--
Total	9		10		4	

Less than half of the 23 respondents answering the question (10/23 or 43%) did not notice any change over the last few years concerning the usefulness of Inuktitut for learning about the outside world. While the answers of younger respondents are generally brief, those with children or who have travelled around elaborate a little more:

It's always been like that [English is more useful] (30 year old man).

I think the kids will change over time and they'll understand more. Right now, it is difficult to try to explain something from the outside, something they don't see on a daily basis. It is very difficult to explain because they can't visualise it. But once they know more about other places and besides Nunavut, they'll grow understanding what else is happening around them (28 year old man).

In the course I'm taking [at the College], words are very important, the terms that the professors use. And I am still learning (36 year old man).

Older respondents appear nostalgic about traditional Inuktitut, still present in the smaller communities but disappearing in Iqaluit:

Yes there have been changes [in the role of Inuktitut], in both ways. I've noticed Inuit children from the North Baffin, in the Pond Inlet, Arctic Bay area, who speak only in Inuktitut in their homes. I really envy them for that. They don't even say a word of English when they are talking. I envy them for being like that. Children whom you don't expect to hear speaking so much [in Inuktitut], I love it! The children around here are more exposed to Qallunaat, so they speak mostly in English. I think they will continue to speak in English, more of it actually, here in Iqaluit. Probably everywhere else too (68 year old woman).

### 10.2 Language and the outside world: expected changes

Respondents under 50 expect an increase in the number of college graduates in Inuit communities. But this could lead many young people, at least in Iqaluit, to give up Inuktitut in favour of English in order to become more educated and get better jobs. Some believe that this would entail a more or less complete deterioration of the Aboriginal language. Coining new words for modern realities could thwart this tendency a bit, as would perhaps the recognition by the international community that Inuit constitute a fully-fledged nation:

Coming up with new words. When they are coming up with new words next time, they should teach them in school, so it could change. But right now, we are not going anywhere. It is like we're going the other way, we're going like negative Inuktitut, minus Inuktitut like minus one, minus two. We have to come back to the positive. If they add more Inuktitut words and teach them at school, and if we are taught in our community, so when we go somewhere else, we could then learn about their dialect. In this way, it would change (22 year old man).

We've got to get more involved in the international community, you know, bring our government to

a par with everybody else. I think our government is already up to a par anyway, but this is Nunavut and I don't expect everything to change in one day, especially for a big thing like this [being recognised at the international level]. That's why I say it could take from 10 to 15 years. That might sound like a long time, but it is not (30 year old man).

## 11. Language and the community

Answers to the question "What language is the most useful to communicate with other people in your community?" are particularly interesting because discourse practices and intergenerational communication are directly concerned. They show that on the one hand, linguistic choice depends more on who is there than on any intentional decision to speak this or that language. For example, respondents say that when at least one Qallunaaq is present, they use English for communicating among themselves. But in Igloolik, asserts one young woman, the situation is different: in the presence of a non-Inuk, many Inuit will just shut up, because they feel awkward speaking English.

On the other hand, some young respondents who consider themselves as not really fluent in Inuktitut state that it is difficult to communicate with members of other generations, because addressing them in English would be disrespectful. They prefer to keep silent rather than speaking English or broken Inuktitut:

In our community, we only communicate in Inuktitut. And when there is a Qallunaaq, we seem to stop talking, because, I guess, we are so used to talk in Inuktitut (21 year old woman, originally from Igloolik).

[In the community I speak] English, for I can't speak very well in Inuktitut, and I don't even talk to Inuit elders because I am not a good Inuktitut speaker. I think it is disrespectful to try and speak to an Inuk elder in English (21 year old woman),

I understand better in Inuktitut because sometimes, I don't understand in English (24 year old woman).

When I am speaking in Inuktitut, I realise that I am more approachable through language. Sometimes, when I am speaking too much English, it is too direct, it could be aggressive to people who do not really understand English, and they could misunderstand if they didn't get what I mean. That person might not really understand what my intention is. S/he could get offended. If I say it in Inuktitut, I say the real meaning of it, and that's the only explanation that s/he would understand. [...] The language of the Qallunaaq is hard, it gets confusing, like guessing what s/he is saying, what s/he is trying to say. If it is said in Inuktitut once, it is understandable (22 year old man).

Seven out of 9 respondents aged between 30 and 49 use mostly Inuktitut within the community (6 cases), or speak both languages (2 cases). But for this age group, the interactional context (the presence of Qallunaaq for instance) seems as important as it is for younger individuals:

When there is an Inuk, I speak in Inuktitut, and when it is a Qallunaaq, I speak in English (45 year old man).

If the person is an Inuk, or if two persons were Inuit, it would be more comfortable to use Inuktitut. If there is an Inuk and a Qallunaaq, then I speak in English (42 year old woman).

This middle-aged group is at the core of the transition toward full bilingualism. Some respondents remember their younger years, when their grandparents used special words and tried to minimise as much as possible the influence of English. Using English was perceived as a lack of respect, especially when elders were present. This explains why parents of that age group want

to preserve Inuktitut by transmitting it to their children:

With the people I grew up with and when I talk to elders, I usually talk more in Inuktitut, although if an Inuk talks to me in English, I will talk back in Inuktitut. Years ago, when we were younger, an elder told us that we were talking too much in English. He told us: "If you talk Inuktitut [after having used too much English], no one will understand" (41 year old woman).

Finally, older respondents assert that Inuktitut is the breathing lung of Inuit tradition, and its use for communication within the community is a source of identity. The community is seen as a whole that holds together thanks to language. Individuals over 50 often see English as a threat, or at least as a disrespectful element, thus concurring with the young respondent quoted above:

When we are socialising within the community, we talk in Inuktitut. This makes us closer to each other, knowing that we are together as Inuit and understand each other through our language. It makes us as one (59 year old man).

### **11.1 Language and the community: perceptions of change**

Most young respondents mention that since Nunavut, English has become more visible in Iqaluit. This is interesting because, as already seen, answers to other questions point, by contrast, to an increase in the visibility of Inuktitut. Actually, it is quite possible that *both* languages have reached the forefront, but in different sectors: Inuktitut on public signs and in government offices; English in private businesses and on the street, because of a massive influx of Qallunaat since 1999. This holds true for Iqaluit. In smaller communities, change has been much less perceptible:

More Qallunaat are coming in (18 year old man).

Many Inuit don't understand when we are speaking in Inuktitut [because they are not fluent enough]. I think that's how it has changed (24 year old woman).

They are mostly the same people, so there has not been any change (25 year old man, originally from Igloolik).

No [change]. People in smaller communities always speak in Inuktitut (24 year old woman).

Some respondents between 30 and 49 have noticed that people now seem to speak more Inuktitut with their children and other members of the community than it was the case before 1999. This might stem from a consciousness – which would have become more intense since the creation of Nunavut – of the importance of linguistic choice for preserving Inuktitut. Other respondents, however, do not see much change, or they have been struck by the pidginisation (simplification and mixture) of Inuktitut:

They are trying to use more Inuktitut these days (40 year old woman).

Yes, Qallunaatitut [English] and Inuktitut being put together nowadays (37 year old woman).

There doesn't seem to be too much change (39 year old woman).

Respondents aged 50 and over appear more fatalistic. English is the only possible way to get a decent job and Inuit will definitively lose their language within one or two generations:

As elders, we are unable to speak English. So, this will not happen in my generation [English becoming the only community language]. But when we, elders, start to dwindle in number, I think that they will switch to Qallunaatitut. I think that our descendants will start speaking in English (77 year old man).

There are quite a few elders in town, but it isn't so when we meet, there are only a few of us. When we gather for a feast, there is always a big turnout, but when we meet here, there doesn't seem to be

a lot of us (74 year old woman).

### **11.2 Language and the community: expected changes**

When asked if they expect change in the future concerning the community language, respondents generally point out that the trend they are now perceiving, an increasing use of English, should continue. So, there will not be any significant change, at least in Iqaluit:

No matter where we go, there are signs and everything is in English. Everywhere we go, we are speaking more in English (18 year old woman).

This [increasing visibility of English] is because there is a lot of people from down South coming over to Iqaluit (25 year old man).

I don't think there will be a change, such as people starting to use Inuktitut or English more and more (28 year old man).

I don't know right now (30 year old man).

We are living more in English now at home (38 year old woman, mother of 5 children).

### **12. Is it important for Inuit politicians to express their ideas in Inuktitut?**

Out of 34 respondents who answered that question, 28 (82%) assert that it is important for politicians to talk in Inuktitut. This opinion is particularly strong among individuals aged 50 and over. Even if they find admissible the presence of English and of Qallunaat in the Nunavut Government, they consider that traditional Inuktitut (the language of the elders) should be considered as an ideal to be aimed at by politicians. With good Inuktitut, the meaning of political ideas would not be lost. Some older respondents deplore, though, that politicians have not kept their word concerning the status of Inuktitut:

Yes [politicians should speak Inuktitut]. But they said things would run in Inuktitut, but they are not putting their efforts on that language. They talk to each other in Inuktitut among themselves, but not with all of the words. I watch television when they are sitting, and they are like that. They are not keeping what they said they would do. This is why they are not speaking enough Inuktitut (85 year old man).

I can't forget that they said that our language will be used when we have our own government. I don't see them using the elders' language, even when they meet. They seem like they only speak for themselves (74 year old woman).

Respondents between 30 and 49 believe that it is important for politicians to talk in Inuktitut – in order, for a good part, to show respect toward elders – but they consider the use of English positive too. It may help speakers of different dialects understanding exactly what is meant when discussing politics. Conversely, using Inuktitut officially provides jobs to Inuit interpreters and translators, even if translation may obscure the meaning of political discourse:

Yes it is very important for me, if we want a positive future and not losing our language and culture, to use it [political discourse] more realistically, both in Inuktitut and in English. That way we can move forward (36 year old woman).

If I was to speak, to interpret what I am reading, there are times the message would get lost in the translation. When we try and convey the message, if it is in English, there are times the message gets lost (39 year old woman).

I believe the Inuit politicians should express their ideas all in Inuktitut, for the interpreters will have a good job to do, in speaking or writing (43 year old man).

Yes [politicians should express themselves in Inuktitut]. The elders are unilingual and some of the interpreters skew things. They don't really change the meaning, but they sometimes change it (45 year old man).

Finally, respondents under 30 have divided opinions. They show a very strong commitment toward Nunavut and they believe that politicians represent the voice of people who, in a majority of cases, express themselves in Inuktitut. Moreover, in their eyes, using the Aboriginal language confers more authenticity to the political message. But some young respondents assert that the required level of Inuktitut is too high: translating some political and administrative terms into that language could breed confusion. Their opinions thus concur for a good part with those of older respondents, though their thinking is often more idealistic than realistic:

English is better because I don't understand their dialects (18 year old man).

Definitely, when they are using their own language, the true meaning of what they are saying comes out of their heart (22 year old man).

Yes, it would be better if they spoke in Inuktitut, because the people they are representing are Inuit (24 year old woman).

Yes, it would be better [for politicians to speak Inuktitut]. They are elected because of their knowledge. I believe they should use Inuktitut, because they are in Nunavut and people want to hear what is important for them (25 year old man).

### **12.1 Is it useful for Inuit politicians to express themselves in English?**

Nineteen respondents out of 28 – 12 of them under 30 years of age – think that using English is useful in Nunavut politics. This does not enter in contradiction with the previous question, where a vast majority of respondents stressed the necessity that politicians speak Inuktitut. The use of English is seen as a technical necessity. It facilitates the understanding of hard-to-translate political and administrative concepts. It also gives Inuit the opportunity to promote their culture and ideas on a wider scene, which includes both local Qallunaat and people living outside Nunavut, though this should not be done at the expense of monolingual elders:

Yes it is useful for them to speak English as well, because the majority of the people working at the Government of Nunavut are Qallunaat (21 year old woman).

I think it is a very useful thing to give all ideas in English (29 year old man).

Inuktitut yes, but for me, I find that I understand English better (21 year old woman).

There is not a lot of elders left now. For people in my age group, I think it would be okay if they spoke in English (28 year old man).

It would also be good if they [political statements] were in English too, because more people are learning English and they avoid Inuktitut texts (24 year old woman).

If they spoke in English, it would be easier for me to understand (18 year old woman).

If they were speaking in English, the elders would not be able to understand them. That would not be good (37 year old man).

Inuktitut would be better because there are unilingual Inuit out there, but speaking in English is necessary too (37 year old woman).

Yes sometimes [English is necessary], when there is a word that cannot be translated (39 year old woman).

Yes it [English] would be useful. There are also Qallunaat politicians and co-workers (40 year old woman).

It's better if they use Inuktitut (45 year old man).

Unsurprisingly perhaps, 4 out of 5 respondents over 50 state their preference for the exclusive use of Inuktitut by politicians. One of them even mentions that the cultural gap between Inuit and Qallunaat is so wide that the English language is completely unsuitable to the proper governance of Nunavut. Such an essentialist vision of culture means that cultural differences are insuperable:

They [politicians] are the ones who are representing the Inuit. It [their mandate] wouldn't be too useful for Qallunaat. But when they need to communicate in English with Qallunaat or the [federal] government, it's fine (59 year old man).

I wouldn't feel comfortable with that because they are Inuit and shouldn't speak in English. I used to think that everyone at the Nunavut Government would be Inuit, but they also have Qallunaat among them (74 year old woman).

They use both [languages] now, but they should consider that the North is run a lot differently than they do in the South. The way they do things and the way their minds work are a lot different. If you are an Inuk, you will not think like a Qallunaaq. Some of them think and try to live like Qallunaat, along with their own culture. But the Qallunaaq culture is not like our culture at all (78 year old man).

### **13. Is it really useful to have interpretation in the Legislative Assembly?**

All 32 respondents to this question answer positively as interpretation toward Inuktitut is concerned, and most of them also agree that it is useful to translate into English. One important reason to interpret in Inuktitut is that it enables monolingual Inuit to understand what is going on in the Assembly. More generally, simultaneous interpretation improves the level of comprehension of several listeners who might get confused when hearing some administrative jargon. Elders believe that thanks to interpretation, they can involve themselves more knowingly in political life:

They are utilised a lot and it is useful to have interpreters in the Legislative Assembly. When they meet sometimes, they have elders and messages for elders. We only understand if interpreters are provided for us. They are very useful for us as elders (78 year old man).

Yes, interpreters really have use. I've said to a couple of them that they seem to automatically know what the person will be saying ahead of time. I'm sure it is because they have been interpreting for a long time (68 year old woman).

Respondents between 30 and 49 agree that simultaneous interpretation is good for elders, and that it clarifies what politicians have to say. Translation gives more transparency to the English technical lexicon. It also provides jobs for individuals skilled at languages:

Canada has got two languages that are recognised, we've got English and French, and here in Nunavut, that is already three interpreters we need right off the back. Yes, it is important to have translators (30 year old man).

Yes they are very useful. There are some words that are hard to translate into Inuktitut, such as financial terms. Some English terms are too complicated to translate. Even though I'm able to speak in Inuktitut, there are some Inuktitut terms that I don't know, that is where translators are beneficial (39 year old woman).

Yes [interpreters are useful] because there are other communities and all our dialects are different from each other, and we residents of Iqaluit are said to speak like a young child. But that is okay, for we are all different from each other (41 year old woman).

Yes it is useful; much of the elders are unilingual (45 year old man).

Respondents under 30 find simultaneous interpretation very useful. It entails a better understanding of political stakes at the community level. Translation is seen as a tool enabling all Inuit, and even all residents of Nunavut whatever their ethnicity, to share the same political concerns, and this independently from their geographical situation, their social class and their level of linguistic competence:

Because there are a lot of Qallunaat here. I think it is convenient (21 year old woman).

The interpreters are very useful, because they are the ones who hold the language and they let people understand. If a Qallunaat says something that an Inuk does not understand, that's where interpreters come in to make it clear. They are the ones who bridge the gap (22 year old man).

Yes it would be useful for me, for us who would have not understood, to understand what is being said, because there now are interpreters (23 year old woman).

It is very important because there are dialect differences and stuff like that, and people might not have total understanding of a meaning. For non-speakers of Inuktitut, that would give them an idea as to how things are settled, and stuff like that. It does have a great effect on everybody (29 year old man).

#### **14. Importance of Inuktitut in the administration of Nunavut**

All 35 respondents agree that people working for the administration of Nunavut should communicate in Inuktitut among themselves. Their reasons have to do with preserving the language, fostering political autonomy and being polite toward elders. Many people, though, including most younger respondents are conscious that it is primordial to know both Inuktitut and English to be able to navigate through politics:

It would be better if they spoke in Inuktitut, They did say that the majority of Inuit would get the jobs when we self-governed ourselves. They are not doing this. You can tell that it isn't that way (74 year old woman).

Because some Qallunaat are arriving here, some are French and some Qallunaat. The French are able to communicate in French. The bosses are Qallunaat, yet they are able to communicate with each other. It would be the same with Inuktitut [if it was spoken by the bosses]. They are able to understand their superiors (78 year old man).

It is much better when they use Inuktitut, but it is not like that in all communities (85 year old man).

I believe it is important that people working in the administration of Nunavut should only speak in Inuktitut and do written Inuktitut, for it is our language as well as English (43 year old man).

Yes, they should all be Inuit [speakers]. It is Nunavut, it was built for Inuit (45 year old man).

##### **14.1 The administration of Nunavut and written communication**

Generally speaking, respondents assert that the written language helps them promoting their culture and traditions. Syllabics allow elders to understand the documents they receive. For individuals under 30, the syllabic writing system constitutes an important symbol of Inuit identity, but they think that it is not really useful for them because many do not read it fluently. The idea of reading an official text written in Inuktitut syllabics seems very far from their reality.

For young respondents, English is more useful because it reads faster, it is more transparent, and they understand it much more easily:

I like the idea that there are people who read in Inuktitut (21 year old woman).

That [Inuktitut texts] I don't find really important because sometimes it is much faster to read in English. Some people are faster in English, although I think Inuktitut is very important. But it is just so much easier in English (22 year old man).

It is important, but some people back home can't read in Inuktitut. Writing to them in English instead of Inuktitut is better understood (23 year old woman, originally from Igloolik).

Yes, I feel it is very important. The adults want to know what's going on (25 year old man).

Roman orthography would be OK. I am able to read (28 year old man).

I don't mind the Inuktitut written documents, but I can't read them anymore and can't write it. We are using too many Qallunaat ways (29 year old man).

For respondents between 30 and 49, using syllabics is closely linked to the development and reinforcement of Inuktitut and of knowledge in general. Some want to reverse the present dominance of written English in favour of Inuktitut, but opinions are mixed as to the practical importance of syllabics, especially in official communications:

Yes it is very important. If we want a development, we should speak in Inuktitut (45 year old man).

If there were texts written in Inuktitut, we the younger generation would start to read and learn the Inuktitut language as well. As for myself, the only way I started learning in Inuktitut was when I started seeing and reading the Inuktitut language (43 year old man).

Yes it [syllabics] is important, but I have no use for them (37 year old man).

Finally, for respondents 50 and over, using syllabics has both a practical and a symbolic value. Those among them whose eyes are OK can read syllabics easily, but some mention that the meaning of a number of texts is not always clear:

[Written documents] are important as long as they are done properly (59 year old man).

Yes, it is very important if they could show more texts in Inuktitut (68 year old woman).

I don't know if my written documents are in English or in Inuktitut because my eyesight is very poor now (78 year old man).

## **15. Communicating in Inuktitut with Nunavut residents**

Twenty-nine respondents out of 32 (90.5%) believe that it is important for the government of Nunavut to communicate in Inuktitut with the territory's residents. All age groups find that people working with the public (clerks, receptionists, etc.) should speak Inuktitut when addressing monolingual Inuit. Young people do not generally insist that they themselves be addressed in Inuktitut, but they find it important that older individuals be spoken to in that language. Because the Nunavut Government was established in order that local residents be better taken in charge, people expect to receive services in their mother tongue, orally as well as in a written form:

Yes [communication should be in Inuktitut], because Nunavut should be an Inuktitut province or territory I should say (25 year old man).

Again, some of the elders can't speak in English. They wouldn't be able to understand anything at all if it weren't in Inuktitut, and they wouldn't know what is going on (45 year old man).



Yes it is important, for the elders at least (29 year old man).

When you receive documents and you can't read in English, it isn't very good when you are unable to decipher the words and you can't understand them (77 year old man).

Several respondents, though, insist that understanding a message correctly is more important than the language in which it is transmitted. For them, it is rather unrealistic to think that communication should be exclusively in Inuktitut, given the fact that all kinds of people work for the Government of Nunavut:

They can use both Qallunaatit and Inuktitut as would be better (20 year old woman).

They should speak in Inuktitut, but if they are not understood, they could speak in English to try and get the message across (21 year old woman).

There are a number of people who go on the radio and say that when we get Nunavut, we'll do this or that. Their thoughts are, when they call the Government of Nunavut, that they will be spoken to in Inuktitut. When that doesn't happen, they get upset (39 year old woman).

I don't think Inuktitut is used more now in Nunavut government offices. When you see job advertisements for the government, all are written in English. I hardly see job advertisements in Inuktitut (43 year old man).

### **15.1 Problems with being served in one's language of choice**

Twelve respondents out of 27 (44%), including 3 individuals under 30, say they have problems being served in their language.

A majority of younger, bilingual respondents assert that they do not have any problem receiving services in their preferred language. What seems important for them is to understand and be understood, in whatever language is more practical:

I don't mind receiving a letter from a Qallunaaq, even if they cannot speak in Inuktitut because they are Qallunaat. And if I receive a letter in Inuktitut, I don't mind either, but when I can't understand it, that is when I have a problem (21 year old woman).

I myself have a tendency to speak in English if there is a Qallunaaq. So, by using my knowledge of English, I get what I need. I'm not too worried about it. But I get worried about those that cannot speak in English too well (22 year old man).

There are times when we are reading and we start asking our teacher about what we don't understand. It is because some of the teaching materials we are reading are written in the traditional language (23 year old woman).

Qallunaat ways are everywhere. If I were to receive a text written in Inuktitut, I would be able to read it, but I can't even write it [Inuktitut] anymore (29 year old man).

Older respondents state that it is very seldom that they receive documents in Inuktitut. Some, though, add that it is not a problem to find a competent translator. Elders say that they do not really interact with civil servants, but all of them, with the exception of one bilingual person, have problems receiving documents in their language of choice:

When I am handed English documents, I read them instead. I really don't get any Inuktitut material (37 year old woman).

Yes, there has been a number of times when we receive a document that is written in English. It is only because we have translators that we can hand the document to them and they will do the translation. That is where we don't have a problem, having translators (39 year old woman).

For example, there are automated systems where they tell you to press this and that, and you want the service in Inuktitut, so you press that button and the person who picks the phone up is a Qallunaat who doesn't even speak Inuktitut (41 year old woman).

I myself don't have problem [receiving services] because I can speak both languages (59 year old man).

They are always in English. I only understand them through my husband when they are in English (68 year old woman).

I don't think I will receive anything in Inuktitut (77 year old man).

As written documents are specifically concerned, bilingual respondents who do not really read Inuktitut say they do not have problems with receiving documentation in English. Generally speaking, people want to get texts which are clearly written, whether in English or in Inuktitut.

## **16. Did the use of Inuktitut in Nunavut government offices increase over the last few years?**

Opinions are divided: 11 respondents (out of 30) answer no, 13 say yes and 6 (including 3 elders) do not know. Some think that the administration is dominated by Qallunaat, thus marginalising the use of Inuktitut and encouraging Inuit to speak English among themselves. Others observe that the Members of the Legislative Assembly use Inuktitut a lot, and that civil servants are more aware than before about the importance of preserving the Aboriginal language:

I do not know. It seems like there are a lot of Qallunaat employees with the Nunavut Government (21 year old woman).

I truly think that GN [Government of Nunavut] offices have a majority of Qallunaat working, who do not speak in Inuktitut. But the few last times I was in GN offices, even if there were Inuit working there, a majority of them spoke in English, though a majority of workers were Qallunaat (21 year old woman).

Yes, in a slow pace, it [Inuktitut] has increased (39 year old woman working at the Assembly).

They keep talking about it [increasing the use of Inuktitut]. They always talk about it in English, yet they won't talk about it in their own language (41 year old woman working at the Languages Commissioner office).

It is possible that there has been an increase recently. It is apparent that there has been an effort to promote it [Inuktitut] (68 year old woman).

I really don't know what to say. I really don't visit them [government officials]. I watch them on TV sometimes and they use Inuktitut. It is good that they use it (68 year old woman).

### **16.1 Do you expect changes in the use of Inuktitut in government offices?**

Twenty-three respondents out of 29 (79%) believe that the use of Inuktitut will increase in public offices. They think that raising the level of formal education and coining new technical terms in Inuktitut will help boosting the language. Some elders, though, are more cautious, noticing that young Inuit now act and talk like Qallunaat; they may get more jobs, but these jobs require using English:

The young people are always looking up at us. They learn from their parents and from other adults. Inuktitut should really be used more (24 year old woman).

Absolutely [it will change]. After I finish my school, I'm really going to put my effort working on that (25 year old man).

It would be great if it did increase. To try to translate the technical words that the highly educated people use is not that easy, but if we just try to learn from them, it would be better (36 year old woman).

Yes, more Inuit are going to school, so it's going to increase (45 year old man).

But if they all can't speak in Inuktitut anymore, it is obvious that they will be able to speak [only] in English when us, the elders, are not around anymore. They will all be speaking in English, that I know already. They don't like speaking in Inuktitut. The students seem to find it hard to try and speak in Inuktitut (85 year old man).

I think it [Inuktitut] should increase in the future, but all their superiors are Qallunaat and they have adopted the Qallunaat way of running things. I don't see them helping their fellow Inuit. It seems now that they are more accommodating to the Qallunaat and not to Inuit. That is what I am hearing now (78 year old man).

## **16.2 Can Inuktitut really become the working language of the Nunavut Government?**

Eighteen respondents out of 30 (60%) believe that Inuktitut will actually become the working language of the Nunavut Government, seven do not think so, and 5 do not know. The minority who do not believe that Inuktitut can become the principal working language have questions about dialects: which form of Inuktitut would become official? They also mention the fact that Qallunaat civil servants would have problems communicating with their Inuit co-workers, and that the linguistic sophistication of young Inuktitut speakers is not high enough to allow them operating the government machine entirely in the Aboriginal language. Those who answer positively often stress that if Inuit want to become an autonomous people, they should be bold enough to vote laws that would give Inuktitut more visibility:

I don't know. I would like it [Inuktitut] to be more visible, but it is not really believable to see it becoming a reality (21 year old woman).

Sometimes I get discouraged when I think about it, after having been answered in English by a Qallunaat working at the government office (24 year old woman).

It can become the working language as long as people can understand it. I don't think we can expect Inuktitut to be the working language within a short term, but in the long term [it could], if it is emphasised to people working in the government that it is possible [to have Inuktitut as working language] over time (29 year old man).

I'd like to see that happening, but slowly it can get better (36 year old woman).

Now, today, I think that English is dominating even more. So, I don't see this happening in the near future (37 year old man).

I don't expect it to (41 year old woman).

It is only if Inuktitut is taught that these young people will be able to speak better (77 year old man).

It can be possible if the government was to have a policy (59 year old man).

Yes it can be a working language because there are office employees who are Inuit. It would be nice to see more Inuit employees because there are some who are quite capable (68 year old woman).

We were told that we were going to be more free and they have to keep their word. If they start to show more of it [Inuktitut], I would really like it if they live up to their words (68 year woman).

It would be convenient because we hear all the time that the government will do this and that for the residents (78 year old man).

Some respondents suggest very concrete measures for helping Inuktitut become the working language of Nunavut. These include:

- increasing the number of Inuit civil servants;
- enticing Qallunaat into learning Inuktitut;
- reinforcing Inuktitut in the Legislative Assembly;
- translating more technical texts into Inuktitut;
- promoting reading in Inuktitut among youngsters;
- increasing the role of elders and of Inuit intellectuals in the community.

## 17. Increase in the use of Inuktitut in the community

**Table 16 – Over the last few years, did you notice an increase in the amount of Inuktitut used in the community? (N = 28)**

	Yes		No		Maybe / don't know	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
-30 years old	3	1	5	7	--	--
30-49 years old	2	2	1	1	1	--
50+ years old	1	--	2	2	--	--
Total	9		18		1	

Eighteen respondents out of 28 (64%) believe that the use of Inuktitut has not increased in Iqaluit since the last few years. Some, however, notice that the situation is different in smaller villages, where the Aboriginal language is thriving. The continuing predominance of English in the capital of Nunavut might be due to the heterogeneity of its population, which includes many Qallunaat and a great number of Inuit speaking various dialects. One young respondent originally from Igloodik notices that she is laughed at by Iqalummiut when she speaks her mother tongue, because they find it cooler to talk in English. The minority who think that the use of Inuktitut has indeed increased attribute it to a higher number of Inuit teachers in the local schools, or to a growing effort on the part of several individuals who now work actively at the preservation of the Aboriginal language:

It has increased a little bit, maybe, mostly among adults. Those young people who are more familiar with English, because they have been spoken to in English, do not always understand [Inuktitut]. Elders use it and I think it was their only way [of speaking]. When I'm talking with people, they just laugh at me thinking that I'm using too much of Inuktitut. And these English speakers just laugh when they find that Inuktitut is being used more [than before]. Maybe the Inuktitut language will be lost in the future (21 year old woman, originally from Igloodik).

No it has not increased, especially among young people (24 year old woman).

They probably speak it at their homes, but when they are in a different community or when they move to a different community, or when people move in order to attend school, they get together bringing different dialects and they end up speaking in English (25 year old man).

You hear more Inuktitut being used nowadays, but if you take Iqaluit for an example, you have a combination of a lot of different people here. It is difficult to try to determine how many people are using the actual Inuktitut language. It has definitely increased, though. Among the people you know, you tend to see more efforts being made to speak the Inuktitut language (28 year old man).

I think it is more outside of Iqaluit, in other communities such as Kinngait, Broughton Island or Pangnirtung. They seem to be speaking more Inuktitut. That is what I think. For those places, it seems fine (37 year old woman).

I believe so [the use of Inuktitut is increasing] as more Inuit teachers are starting to rise. There was a time when we'd only be taught in English and we hardly used the Inuktitut language in school, although we'd use it at home. I can say that out of Iqaluit, in other communities, the use of the Inuktitut language is more steady, but it is apparent that its use is starting to rise here in Iqaluit (40 year old woman).

More Inuit are speaking in English because we now have television and all the schools are teaching just English now, so Inuit children are speaking more English (41 year old woman).

I have no idea. Some children, although pure Inuit, are only able to understand basic Inuktitut (74 year old woman).

I don't think Inuktitut has increased. In Iqaluit, when teenagers gather together, they speak in English only (77 year old man).

### **17.1 Do you expect changes in the use of Inuktitut in the community?**

Seventy-eight percent of respondents believe that the use of Inuktitut will increase in the future, a position which contrasts with the often negative answers given to the preceding question. For individuals under 30, the high birth-rate in Inuit communities will help a lot with the preservation of Inuktitut, even if the dominance of English remains extremely strong. Some mention that they should overcome their lack of communicative skills in their mother tongue, which incites them to speak English or to remain silent in an intergenerational context. Older respondents insist that it is only through education and government initiatives that Inuktitut will grow in the future:

Yes [it will increase] but if people are shy, they would use the English language (25 year old man).

For me, I think it should increase, because Inuit are growing (21 year old woman).

Qallunaat ways are dominating. So, they [Inuit] should use more Inuktitut (28 year old man).

No [it will not increase], because we first have to reclaim Inuktitut as a language (24 year old woman).

I believe that it is weak for now, but Inuit are going to realise that we must keep our language (22 year old man).

With the teenagers as they are now, we will not hear real Inuktitut. I don't think we will see the complete language again (77 year old man).

Especially, if the Inuktitut language is used more in the government buildings, it would definitely increase (59 year old man).

## **18. Financing the promotion of Inuktitut**

Twenty respondents out of 34 (59%) think that it is OK if the Government of Nunavut and / or Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) invest relatively large sums of public money to help increasing the usage of Inuktitut within Nunavut. Four individuals (3 of which are under 30) disagree. Interestingly, ten more respondents wish that public money be invested in the promotion of Inuktitut, but they do not think that it would change anything for the future of the language. Several among them add that linguistic transmission occurs at home, and that government funds would probably be better invested elsewhere.

Some respondents from all three age groups mention that elders might become more involved in language promotion. They may be considered the guardians of tradition, but they are not really listened to, even if Inuktitut should be a source of pride:

No, I don't think public money should be invested (21 year old woman).

Yes [money should be invested] because we are losing the language (21 year old woman).

If elders were the object of more attention, it would be realised that Inuktitut is a very unique kind of language and should not be lost. If they [elders] are paid reasonably, they would want to do it [promote Inuktitut] again (22 year old man).

I agree and I am grateful for it, for wanting to improve the usage of Inuktitut (23 year old woman).

The money they put in could be used for a better cause than Inuktitut (24 year old woman).

They should introduce workplaces where the Inuktitut language can be used, and be able to have Qallunaat speaking in Inuktitut (40 year old woman).

No [money should not be invested] because this could be taught at home by their parents. Money could be spent on social issues rather than trying to preserve the Inuktitut language (41 year old woman working at the Languages Commissioner office).

I agree with the Government of Nunavut and NTI to invest large sums to help increase the use of the Inuktitut language. It is my language and I am proud of it (43 year old man).

I've never seen how much they give. They do grant some money to school, but not enough (45 year old man).

Respondents 50 and over are more cynical – or more lucid – in their appraisal of government implication in language promotion. Their argument is that promising to promote Inuktitut is just a means for getting votes; once elected, most politicians do not keep their promise:

They always say that they are trying to get money to help with the Inuktitut language, but it seems like they are diverting it to themselves. They are only doing it for their own purposes (74 year old man).

Yes it should be that way, helping people [with language]. When they are trying to get votes, they say that they will be helping Inuit. Once they get voted into office, they forget all about the people who voted for them (78 year old man).

## 19. Language and the young people

### 19.1 Transmitting the language to grandchildren

**Table 17 – Do you think your (great)grandchildren will speak Inuktitut? (N = 32)**

	Yes		No		Hope / don't know	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
-30 years old	3	7	2	1	1	--
30-49 years old	3	3	2	2	--	1
50+ years old	2	1	1	1	1	1
Total	19		9		4	

Nineteen respondents out of 32 (59%) believe that their grandchildren or great-grandchildren will still be able to speak Inuktitut. The proportion is higher (71%) among respondents under 30 years of age, and lower among those aged between 30 and 49 (54.5%) or over 50 (43%). This means that younger individuals (who, for the most part, do not have grandchildren yet) give an idealistic answer, because they are conscious of the part played by language in asserting Inuit identity. Older respondents are more realistic. This is specially true for

those aged 50 and over, who do not hesitate to be very critic about the poor linguistic performances and the ubiquitous use of English among young people:

I try to speak to my children in Inuktitut, but I also add English to it. I use them both. When they get older, like 5 or 6 years old, I would like to see them talking Inuktitut (21 year old woman).

As a mother, if you really push them, they can learn [Inuktitut] (24 year old woman).

My son is learning to speak in Inuktitut fairly quickly; anybody whose parents are Inuit could learn (24 year old woman).

If Inuktitut as a working language becomes successful for the Nunavummiut, there is a good chance that our great-grandchildren in the future may have the opportunity of knowing their proper mother tongue (28 year old man).

To raise them by speaking in Inuktitut, to teach them syllabics, maybe that would be the way (37 year old woman).

I think we are going to keep losing our language because the government uses a language other than our own (36 year old man).

I don't think so [grandchildren speaking Inuktitut]. It is only possible if Inuktitut is kept alive (37 year old man).

Grand-nieces and nephews, I doubt it (41 year old woman).

When looking at my youngest child and at my grandchild, I know they will hardly be able to talk in Inuktitut. I think they will not be able to read and write Inuktitut. The younger generation is communicating more in English (43 year old man).

If the government and NTI invest large sums of money to maintain the Inuktitut language, then, yes, my grandchildren will be able to speak in Inuktitut (59 year old man).

I don't think they will be able to speak it. I think they won't (68 year old woman).

No, [they will] not really [talk Inuktitut]. Their mothers are not speaking in Inuktitut to them. Some of my children are married to Qallunaat. Maybe they admire Qallunaat. I think this is why (78 year old man).

I would love for my great-grandson to speak in Inuktitut, but I don't know if they are speaking to him in English at his place (74 year old woman).

It is interesting to note that some younger respondents originating from smaller communities or married to Qallunaat seem to share the pessimism (or realism) of elders. Maybe that their migration to Iqaluit or their daily contacts with non-Inuit have contributed increasing there awareness of the dominance of English:

I believe so [Inuktitut will not be spoken]. Our young children are speaking in English more than ever before (38 year old woman, originally from Igloodik).

In the future, maybe not. If the Inuktitut language keeps on fading like it is doing now, I think my grandchildren and great-grandchildren will be only speaking in English and won't understand Inuktitut. Because when I was a child, I knew the Inuktitut language and now, these young people mostly speak in English, and I am not that old yet. [...] I think they will completely stop using the Inuktitut language if the government does not introduce teaching in Inuktitut at the high school (21 year old woman, originally from Igloodik).

The way it is going now, quite possibly not [Inuktitut will not be spoken] (25 year old man with a Qallunaat spouse).

## 19.2 Is it important for young people to speak Inuktitut?

Answers to this question are in continuity with the preceding interrogation: some are rather idealistic and others more realistic. The first stress the role of Inuktitut in defining identity while the second insist that what actually happens is that many youngsters find it easier to speak English. In both types of responses, however, there lies an underlying assertion that ideally or not, Inuktitut should be important for young Inuit.

Here are some answers linked with identity:

If you did a study of how many teenagers would be interested in taking Inuktitut classes, a majority of them would, like getting together with an elder, or like a lady teaching sewing and what the woman's roles were long ago, and how they should try and equal it today, and how the woman's role is in today's world (21 year old woman).

There is no other Inuit culture and language. If it is lost, it is gone (36 year old man).

For sure [it is important]. They are Inuit (59 year old man).

Yes [it is important], because they have to know how to speak Inuktitut. Because they have to realise how important our language and culture are (74 year old woman).

It would be better if they started speaking Inuktitut, even teenagers, if they search within themselves and use our language (77 year old man).

Practical responses include the following:

It depends on what we are talking about. We use the most appropriate language for it (20 year old woman).

It is important for me [that the young speak Inuktitut] as long as they can understand each other. But when they talk to each other, they talk to each other in English only. I think it is important if they could talk to each other in Inuktitut and understand each other in that sense (21 year old woman).

Here in Iqaluit, it makes you being concerned: they always speak in English (22 year old man).

Most of them can't understand. They are only speaking in English and not in Inuktitut, and they can't even write (24 year old woman).

These days, our children and their spouses have been educated and they find that it is harder to use Inuktitut, some more than others, although for some it is not the case. They are speaking more in English (68 year old woman).

## 19.3 The importance of Inuktitut for the young since the creation of Nunavut

**Table 18 – Is Inuktitut more important for young people now that Nunavut is in existence? (N = 31)**

	Yes		No		Maybe / don't know	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
-30 years old	8	5	--	1	--	1
30-49 years old	4	4	1	--	1	--
50+ years old	1	1	1	1	1	1
Total	23		4		4	

A large majority (74%) of respondents – but a minority of those 50 and over – believe that with Nunavut, it is more important and it should be easier for young Inuit to speak their mother



tongue, and this even if a majority of them actually talk in English among themselves. Some believe that present and future policies favouring Inuktitut will encourage the young to use the Aboriginal language. Respondents between 30 and 49 are a little more cautious than the younger ones, but they mention an often forgotten factor: it is quite possible that teenagers and young adults who now speak mostly English will revert to Inuktitut when reaching middle age, the same way several middle-aged people, now at ease in Inuktitut, spoke a lot of English during their youth (notably in residential schools):

The young people now have great opportunities to know two languages. [...] They want Inuit to be in senior positions, and they want more opportunities for the people. And Inuktitut should play a key role when people start getting into government positions (29 year old man).

Now that we have it, they have to understand why Nunavut was created. Why do we have Nunavut? Why is the government important? Why do they need to help us more? If we are informed about Nunavut in school, the language will follow (22 year old man).

No, it [Inuktitut] was always important, even before we got Nunavut. Even if we never got Nunavut, it would still be important for us (28 year old man).

If I was to say it as a young person, yes [Inuktitut has become more important]. But it is hard to say what they are thinking. Yes, I would hope for that (39 year old woman).

Yes, they should [speak more Inuktitut] now that Nunavut is in existence (37 year old woman).

I feel that the middle ones are often forgotten. They seem to be over-sighted even if they have the strength of knowing how to speak in both Inuktitut and English. [...] They are the ones who are able to link the younger generation and the elders together (40 year old woman).

Respondents aged 50 and over are more dubious about the alleged growing importance of Inuktitut for the young. In most cases, their attitude toward the role of government and the linguistic competence of young people is rather negative. They find language policies illusory and think that English will not stop encroaching upon Inuktitut, even when cultural activities are concerned:

Yes, I know that they were supposed to be able to speak in Inuktitut when they were starting to work on self-government. They even used to say that the government would be in Inuktitut. I used to hear that, and it is not happening (85 year old man).

I wouldn't agree with that [the growing importance of Inuktitut] because right now, our young people are only speaking English among themselves (74 year old woman).

The teenagers are not using it [the old language] anymore (77 year old man).

Young people don't really bother to think ahead. They're restless. If there are games to go to, they'll go. If there is a movie, they'll go to the movies. They aren't thinking of the future. Because of these reasons, young people need a hand with their future (59 year old man).

#### **19.4 Expected changes in the importance of Inuktitut for the young**

Fourteen respondents out of 24 (58%) believe that there will be positive changes concerning the importance of Inuktitut for young people. Four of these 14 answers are totally positive though, perhaps, a bit idealistic:

These days, there are schools, colleges, night schools and also Inuktitut week. These are starting to make an increase [in language use]. Even computers have Inuktitut fonts now. Tape recorders, games, Inuit are starting to do many different things. Yes it's getting easier. I believe it will get a whole lot better (40 year old woman).

[They should vote] regulating laws that all signs should be in Inuktitut only, and I think it should be just in Inuktitut. That way, everything will be spread over the territory and everyone will learn it. They will have no choice but to learn Inuktitut (25 year old man).

Ten of the 14 positive answers express a little more caution. Respondents assert that it is possible to increase the use of Inuktitut by the young, but only if stronger language policies are implemented and if the language is steadily used at home:

If the politicians are sincere about what they say they are going to do and if they emphasise the importance of the language, then the young generation will become conscious of that importance (59 year old man).

If we use Inuktitut properly with our children, it is going to be okay (24 year old woman).

[Language policies are needed] in case it [Inuktitut] disappears completely. It seems that speaking in Inuktitut has proved to be very hard for the children (28 year old man).

It can, it could really happen. Our Inuktitut language may now be at a state where it is weak, but if we start with the children, it could grow much stronger (22 year old man).

In contrast with the preceding answers, 10 respondents believe more or less strongly that there is no hope for an increase in the use of Inuktitut by the young, even if public efforts are consented. They lay the blame on an alleged lack of expertise among Inuit, on their minority status in the government apparatus, and on the growing presence in northern communities of deleterious substances introduced by the Qallunaat:

There are more of them [Qallunaat] than us (45 year old man).

I have no clue. I don't know the outcome. The Qallunaat have introduced addictive substances, like alcohol and drugs. They are more in the open now. These things just make a person lazy. I don't know what lies ahead in the future. Things are always arriving from the South (77 year old man).

## **20. School and the transmission of Inuktitut**

Thirty-two respondents out of 33 (97%) think that the school should play a positive role in helping young people acquire a better knowledge of Inuktitut. Some of them, especially those coming from Igloolik and Kimmirut, believe that beyond language, the school should also contribute transmitting Inuit cultural values and practices:

Yes, [it should teach] not just in Inuktitut, but also about hunting skills, reading and the traditional way of Inuit. These things would become clearer to young people, to the students (25 year old man, originally from Igloolik).

When I was in school in Kimmirut, they would take us out on the land or making stuff like *ulu* [woman's knife] or knives, harpoons, and teaching new words like *nakuaqtaq* [fearless dog], *alluq* [seal's breathing hole], or stuff like *kikkuliq* [a breathing hole that is easy to spot]... these things; the words that a hunter would use. They passed on words that were new to me and I really enjoyed that (36 year old man, originally from Kimmirut).

Some other respondents think that it is more efficient to teach Inuktitut orally. This should not be limited to school, but also occur at home. In this regard, parents and grandparents play a fundamental role, and it is believed that it is not impossible to relearn one's mother tongue:

[They should provide] educational tapes in Inuktitut, cue cards, computers (41 year old woman working at the Languages Commissioner office).

[School may help] in some ways, but we have to teach them too. For example, I taught my child

how to walk and nobody is going to do it for him (45 year old man).

It would work if they spoke Inuktitut because you can learn just by listening. We have parents who should also contribute to the language (74 year old man).

When I visited school, I've seen my sisters' grandchild who wasn't speaking much in Inuktitut, and when he was placed in an Inuktitut class, I felt pity for him. He didn't speak in Inuktitut, didn't understand it, but he picked it up right away! So now, he even sings in Inuktitut! Some of them are really easy to teach (68 year old woman).

Finally, a few respondents insist on the fact that people should feel free to choose their preferred language of communication, including the possibility that some elders might want to become bilingual:

It is not just the language, it is also about respect. Some may not feel comfortable explaining themselves in English and it would be better if we could express ourselves in Inuktitut (22 year old man).

I think it is primarily up to what parents want for the young people, but there should be opportunities where you could take all your schooling in Inuktitut, and if you want the best of both worlds, then you'll have Inuktitut and English mixed together. But this, I think, would cause some problems down the road or in the long run because it would take too much time to try and teach people in that way (29 year old man).

Yes, teachers should enforce Inuktitut more. [...] But when you want to speak to a Qallunaaq and have no interpretation, it is not good. I do not really mind as long as I can understand a little bit, but I started thinking that I can't speak English, and it is a hindrance. I would like to open communication a bit more, but I am unable to converse in English (77 year old man).

## **20.1 Teaching Inuktitut in high school**

All respondents without exception say that they would like to see Inuktitut becoming a teaching medium at high school. The principal reason they mention is that if this is not done, English risks completely replacing Inuktitut in a not too distant future. Some individuals, though, are conscious that teaching in the Aboriginal language at high school is fraught with technical difficulties (coining new words, developing complex curricula, training teachers, etc.), and that English should continue being taught besides Inuktitut:

It goes back again to reflecting if they want [Inuktitut to become] a working language. If they do, they have to involve all school grades to make it work (28 year old man).

They only have qallunaaq material like maths, science, etc. Maybe if they put more of a northern content in the materials, it would be better (21 year old woman).

Materials should also be developed for higher grades, like 10, 11, 12, because they don't seem to have Inuit studies (39 year old woman).

Yes [Inuktitut should be taught] right to the end of the top grade, to Grade 12 (41 year old woman).

When they get to the high school, they should [be taught in Inuktitut]. It should be used everyday (37 year old woman).

Yes [Inuktitut should be taught] however they can (30 year old man).

The way I think about teaching the Inuktitut language is to teach it, but not so much as English, because we are living the English way more and as I remember, back then, I would notice that somebody without much education would be living the hard way (43 year old man, originally from Igloodik).

Inuktitut should always be taught, whether it is to the young ones or the higher grades. The language needs to be more comprehensible as it is a real issue (59 year old man).

English is the main language now. So, both [languages should be taught]. We are always going to be among the Qallunaat (68 year old woman).

## 20.2 Teaching English in high school

<b>Table 19 – How about teaching in English at high school? (N = 26)</b>			
	<b>In favour</b>	<b>Not in favour</b>	<b>Both languages</b>
-30 years old	7	4	2
30-49 years old	3	1	5
50+ years old	1	--	3
Total	11	5	10

Respondents 30 and over – including 3 elders out of 4 – are mostly in favour of a fully bilingual education, while younger individuals prefer a system where English preserves its importance, though a significant minority among them would like to see Inuktitut predominate in high school. When it comes to explaining their answer, respondents in favour of an "English" or bilingual education give four types of reasons. The first has to do with the practical usefulness of English:

Yes [English] if it is necessary for the job he/she is going for (25 year old man).

Yes in English. For example, there is very handy stuff like GPS that can help get back on track if you get lost out there (36 year old man).

Maybe they should combine them [Inuktitut and English education] together, because sometimes we don't have terms in English (28 year old man).

Another reason is that English enables people to communicate more readily:

We are always using English and we understand each other better in English, plus in Inuktitut (24 year old woman).

If both languages are used it is fine. Qallunaat should also be taught in Inuktitut. If you are from Nunavut and are an Inuktitut speaking Qallunaat, then you and the Inuit would be able to communicate in either language (59 year old man).

English is useful if one wants to study or travel outside the North:

Yeah, English is necessary too. If my child moves out of Nunavut and goes to school, he/she would have no choice but to speak in English. They need to know that, it is necessary (45 year old man).

It [English] would be okay. If they were to travel, they would need English skills. They use English in the South and everywhere else (21 year old woman).

Finally, English is a way for identifying oneself as a Canadian:

This is Canada on top of that (30 year old man).

English right now is a national issue. So, you know, regardless of your mother tongue, like I indicated earlier, if you have a working knowledge of two languages, you're better off. Because there are more opportunities for you to learn, and if you were to travel outside of Nunavut, you would have difficulty if you weren't fluent in English as well (28 year old man).

Those – mainly younger respondents – who would like to see Inuktitut predominate in high

school justify their opinion by appealing to Inuit identity, judging that a real Inuk should be chiefly educated in his/her mother tongue:

I do not live like a Qallunaaq, Only in Inuktitut (29 year old man).

We have enough of English (25 year old man).

They seem to be just learning in English when they go into high school, and there doesn't seem to be enough Inuktitut teachers (23 year old man).

## 21. Changes in ethnic relations since Nunavut

Let us now turn our attention toward some social aspects of the advent of Nunavut. In order to broaden our understanding of the changes in discourse practices brought about by Nunavut and to link them with identity, it may be interesting to see how respondents perceive the evolution of interethnic relations and of local Inuit power after 1999.

**Table 20 – Did relations between Inuit and Qallunaat change after Nunavut? (N = 32)**

	Yes		No	It depends / don't know
	+	-		
-30 years old	1	1	10	2
30-49 years old	5	1	4	2
50+ years old	2	2	2	--
Total	8	4	16	4

While a small majority of respondents 30 and over believe that interethnic relations in Nunavut have changed since 1999, most younger individuals did not witness any modification. Among those who say things are not the same, 8 (out of 12) mention positive changes, but 4 tell about negative modifications in interethnic relations. If many believe that Qallunaat are more open toward Inuit culture than they used to be, that it is much more easier now to make non-Inuit friends, and that Inuit have become an object of envy on the part of Qallunaat, some consider that the growing number of mixed marriages and an increase in linguistic and social barriers between Inuit and non-Inuit are negative outcomes of Nunavut:

The way I see it, Qallunaat are starting to be jealous because there are employment opportunities that require ability to speak in Inuktitut. I think there are times they feel jealous because of the Inuit Employment Policy and the Hiring Policy (39 year old woman).

Before, the Inuit were treated as if they were the slaves of Qallunaat. It is not like that anymore. We are now better known and we are developing (45 year old man).

I think that there are now more Qallunaat able to speak Inuktitut, because, more than Inuit, they have a desire to learn the language (74 year old man).

I feel now, looking back when I was growing up, that then, Qallunaat were more involved with Inuit. They would learn how to speak in Inuktitut. These days, it doesn't seem to be like that. They [Qallunaat] seem to be more disconnected, they are here to work and they seem to just occupy themselves with their work (37 year old man).

It cannot turn around anymore. They have Qallunaat husbands, and even wives. The Qallunaaq way cannot change (85 year old man).

Those who do not see any change are mostly under 30 and for them, interethnic relations are as easy now as they were before Nunavut:

It is still the same. I haven't noticed any change (21 year old woman).

It is still just the same. The friends that I have are still my friends and it is okay like that (24 year old woman).

Because we are no longer children, when new Qallunaat come we make them feel welcome. Even if there wasn't Nunavut, if we were still Nunatsiaq [Northwest Territories], we would still make them feel welcome when they arrive to work and live here (28 year old man).

### 21.1 Expected changes in ethnic relations

<b>Table 21 – Do you expect changes in ethnic relations in the future? (N = 26)</b>			
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
-30 years old	10	2	1
30-49 years old	2	4	1
50+ years old	4	2	--
Total	16	8	2

Interestingly, a vast majority of respondents under 30, who had not noticed changes in ethnic relations since the advent of Nunavut, expect changes for the future. Some expectations (in all age groups) are more realistic and some more idealistic, but almost all have to do with a reinforcement of Inuktitut and Inuit society, and of local control over the territory:

We can't have the same life all the way and it is the same thing with our language. I think it is going to change (23 year old woman).

Inuit are now in control of the government, Inuit have more power now. I don't think Qallunaat are even trying to learn the Inuktitut language, since it is not their language. As far as I am concerned, the relationship between Inuit and Qallunaat here has not improved that much (21 year old woman).

They [Inuit] will go through some hard times because Nunavut is still very new. For this reason, we are yet trying to understand why Nunavut was created. Right now we don't really seem to know what direction to take and we can't really make Qallunaat follow along. This will only become possible when we start to take advantage of what is ours (22 year old man).

The situation will change only when Inuit will not be speaking Inuktitut anymore. It is obvious. Inuit will preserve their appearance, but it will change when there are no more Inuit teachers (77 year old man).

They should ask potential job candidates if they are able to speak Inuktitut when they are sitting at the interview. They should do this when they hire Qallunaat (74 year old woman).

Those who do not expect change – especially among elders – seem to do so out of a preference for social and ethnic stability:

I do not want changes. I just want them and us to have a good relationship (68 year old woman).

My daughters all have Qallunaat spouses. Even if I don't understand them, I don't mind because they help me with food (85 year old man).

### 21.2 Do you think that Qallunaat feel involved with Nunavut?

A majority of respondents believe that Qallunaat living in Nunavut feel involved in the territory. Several of them, however, draw a distinction between transient workers, who come up North to make money and are not really interested in the people and the land, and permanent residents, who now consider Nunavut their home:

I think they are only here for the money (29 year old man).

I don't think they are involved. It seems like they only come here because of the lure of money. We never see them again, they always move back down South when they get old (21 year old woman).

They are involved. They can better understand Inuit customs and culture. They are able to help in areas where we need help (22 year old man).

Most Qallunaat in Nunavut are too Qallunaat, but those who want to learn Inuktitut are the ones I am proud of (21 year old woman).

They [Qallunaat] feel that they are set apart by the Inuit. They feel uncomfortable in their workplace, because of the Inuit Employment Plan that was introduced by the government and which wants the majority of jobs filled by Inuit by the end of the year (37 year old man).

Some of them [Qallunaat] are helping, there are some who are going hunting with the Inuit. Back then they didn't seem to be close, but now Inuit and Qallunaat are getting together more. It seems they are merging into one (77 year old man).

## 22. Inuit power since Nunavut

**Table 22 – Did Inuit gain more power to do as they wish since Nunavut? (N = 27)**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
-30 years old	5	5	3
30-49 years old	8	1	1
50+ years old	2	--	2
Total	15	6	6

A majority of respondents between 30 and 49 believe that Inuit have more power now than they did before Nunavut, though several individuals (many of them under 30) feel that the Government of Nunavut did not fulfil its promises concerning jobs, and that official regulations have now become too restrictive. This may denote some lack of familiarity with the government apparatus:

It seems like that [more power] for some people, and for others, they have to go through what is required by law (25 year old man).

They said that they would create jobs, help with houses and other stuff, but I've never seen anything (29 year old man).

In order to work in our community, since the advent of Nunavut, we've had to have Grade 12. People who do not have Grade 12 can't seem to get any job. It is as if Nunavut is for Qallunaat... We had Nunavut as if to give good jobs to Qallunaat (23 year old woman, originally from Igloolik).

The leaders of Nunavut Tunngavik must let their beneficiaries know a lot more what is available for them (24 year old woman).

Some Inuit are just waiting for someone to tell them what there is under the Land Claims Agreement, which is very powerful. For those who read it over, the Land Claims Agreement is very useful. But it is useless for those who have not read it through, and these people seem to be just waiting and thinking about money (45 year old man).

Among the positive aspects of Nunavut, respondents mentioned the following:

- funding for projects concerning language, culture and society is easier to obtain;
- harvesting activities are now well supported;
- the idea of having the same time zone for all of Nunavut is good;

- students can get fellowships more easily;
- Inuit are more numerous on the labour market;
- it is easier to express one's opinions (through radio, T.V., etc.).

### 23. Being proud of Nunavut

**Table 23 – Do you feel prouder to be an Inuk now that Nunavut exists? (N = 31)**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
-30 years old	8	2	3
30-49 years old	5	5	2
50+ years old	1	5	--
Total	14	12	5

Generally speaking, respondents are proud to be Inuit, but they have not necessarily become prouder because of the creation of Nunavut. There exists an interesting difference, though, between all three age groups. Respondents aged 50 and over seem relatively indifferent – or even cynical – toward Nunavut, whose advent didn't change their opinion about who they are:

I'm still the same person. I don't feel any different (59 year old man).

I have always known that I am an Inuk. This makes no difference to me. When they started talking about having our own government, I thought that Inuit would be a priority. But it looks like we have been backed into a corner (74 year old man).

Among respondents between 30 and 49, opinions are equally divided among those who feel prouder to be Inuit now that Nunavut is in existence, and those who, like the elders, say that it does not make any difference:

No, I'm still the same (30 year old man).

I'm proud to be an Inuk, for when we, Inuit, try, we can do it, and I'm very proud to be Canadian (43 year old man).

I've been proud since the day I was born (41 year old woman).

I have always been proud to be an Inuk (37 year old man).

Yes, I *was* very proud, but I don't trust the leaders (45 year old man).

Finally, a large majority (8 as against 2) of respondents under 30 have felt prouder to be Inuit since the advent of Nunavut. This means that the creation of the new territory and the sentiment of identity generated by that event had a real impact on the young generation, because, it seems, of the advantages linked to Nunavut (opportunities to study, easier funding for various projects, etc.). A few people, though, do not really know what Nunavut means for them:

We seem to have things to do and we can plan for our future, go to school and have financial assistance. For that, I am proud to be an Inuk (25 year old man).

I am proud to be an Inuk, and of my Inuktitut language. I always felt proud (21 year old woman).

If we are taught more in school we will be proud of who we are. I am really proud to have Nunavut, but I just want people to know why there is Nunavut (22 year old man).

I'm proud to be here today, you know, that's pretty much all I could say. I can't reflect being an Inuk because I'm half [half Inuk and half Qallunaaq] you know. I try to make the best out of two worlds (29 year old man).



It's not much use for me. The Nunavut and stuff is not much use for me (29 year old man).

### 23.1 As a resident of Nunavut, do you feel different from other Canadian Inuit?

When answering this question, older respondents insist on dialectal and cultural diversity among Inuit groups rather than on an eventual difference linked to the fact that they have their own territory. Some of them add that diversity is now decreasing and that, for a large part, because of Nunavut, all Inuit can live together and move toward unity:

I think about it like this: because we didn't live together in a same place, even if we were close to each other, we were different. Today, we can live in peace. People who live here in Iqaluit are from many different places (85 year old man).

We are all different. People from Iqaluit and Pangnirtung are different. We are all different. [...] I have compared Iqalungmiut to people from Kimmirut. We are different because we can't live in one community. People from Igloolik used to have law makers, they had real laws for everyday things (74 year old man).

They are gathering. I think this is happening everywhere and not just in Iqaluit. People from other communities keep moving here. We are like that now (77 year old man).

Younger respondents insist on the cultural and linguistic unity of Inuit, implying that living in Nunavut does not make a real difference, though, according to some, there might be a divergence in the degree of preservation of the language and culture, which would be higher in Nunavut:

No [I do not feel different]. We are all from the same background (21 year old woman).

No. Like the Alaskans, they [Inuit from Nunavut] go hunting and trapping. This is a sign of being Aboriginal. I think the way we speak is the only difference in our culture (28 year old man).

Yes [I feel different]. Our language is still strong and the Inuit traditions are still quite visible here in Nunavut (40 year old woman).

Inuit can turn around anytime, they will always be Inuit. I am an Inuk because my mother is Inuk. It will never change even if we go elsewhere in Canada. Inuit can come back anytime. They have their choice. If they do not want to live here, they have their choice (22 year old man).

### 23.2 Nunavut as an example for other Inuit

<b>Table 24 – Do you think that Nunavut is an example for other Inuit? (N = 25)</b>			
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
-30 years old	9	3	--
30-49 years old	6	2	--
50+ years old	4	--	1
Total	19	5	1

Even if they do not think they are different from other Inuit, a majority of respondents (19/25; 76%) believe that Nunavut stands as an example. Despite the shortcomings mentioned by some individuals when answering previous questions, the creation of the new territory is considered beneficial to Inuit language, identity, economy, etc. A few respondents mention that all is not perfect yet – dialects, for instance, should converge toward more unity – and a few others do not think Nunavut should be taken in example:

Yes, more celebrities, more role models (18 year old man).

I think it would be a good example for other Inuit to follow, regardless of where they are from (74 year old woman).

Yes I think it is a good example because we get a lot of help from the Federal Government (36 year old man).

The Nunavut people are hoping to get a self-government system working or under discussion, for looking at options for self-government for the region. So, it is an example for others (28 year old man).

I would want others to follow what Nunavut has done, so that they have good, strong leaders like the Nunavummiut leaders. There have been leaders here who have resigned. I just hope they won't continue to do the same thing, although it is not like that now that we have a female leader (68 year old woman).

Here in Nunavut, the dialects and the way we write are all different. I think it would be a lot better if they were all just the same (29 year old man).

I don't know. I know that people who are running Nunavut are very young (77 year old man).

### 23.3 Nunavut as an example for other Aboriginal people

<b>Table 25 – Do you think Nunavut can be a model for other Aboriginal nations? (N = 24)</b>			
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
-30 years old	7	3	--
30-49 years old	5	--	4
50+ years old	3	--	2
Total	15	3	6

As with the preceding question, the majority of respondents (15/24; 62.5%) believe that Nunavut stands as an example to be followed, this time by Aboriginal nations other than the Inuit. Only three younger individuals do not think so, while a high proportion of respondents 30 and over (6/14; 43%) do not really know how to answer.

Under certain conditions, the Nunavut model of governance can be transposed to other contexts because most if not all Aboriginal languages and cultures suffer from the same prejudice as Inuktitut and Inuit culture. Nunavut may thus stand as a universal source of inspiration and be enviable to other native groups. This situation helps increasing the national and international visibility of Inuit:

If they want to they can try and get their own government, but because we are different. they would have to use a different approach, using their own cultural backgrounds (24 year old woman).

It [Nunavut] brings a good example of what can happen (29 year old man).

Respondents believe, though, that the Nunavut model cannot be transposed integrally. It has to be adapted to the geographical, political, linguistic and social conditions of each specific group. Other Aboriginal nations should also be aware of the danger of White people trying to control native self-governments, as Qallunaat are doing in Nunavut. And finally, some laws concerning education and the job market, which some respondents find rather restrictive, should not be duplicated elsewhere.

### 24. Can one be considered a Nunavummiuq without speaking Inuktitut?

Answers to this question are equally divided between "yes", on the one hand, and "no" or a

mixed response on the other.

**Table 26 – May a resident of Nunavut who does not speak Inuktitut be considered a genuine Nunavummiuq? (N = 29)**

	Yes	No	Mixed response
-30 years old	7	5	2
30-49 years old	4	4	1
50+ years old	3	1	2
Total	14	10	5

Whether positive, negative or mixed, answers summarise some of the criteria used by respondents for defining who is a real resident of Nunavut (a Nunavummiuq) rather than a visitor or transient.

The first criterion is residence (mentioned in 11 answers). Three respondents deem that one cannot be called a Nunavummiuq if he/she was not born in Nunavut. The other respondents, however, think that any person having his/her principal residence in Nunavut is a Nunavummiuq, whatever his/her ethnic origin:

As a resident of Nunavut, even if you are black or of whatever race, if you live in Nunavut, then you are from there and may call yourself a Nunavummiuq (43 year old man).

I would consider a Qallunaaq who lives here as a Nunavummiuq, even though he/she is a Qallunaaq (74 year old woman).

We have to consider them as Nunavummiut these people who do not speak Inuktitut. They are our fellow Nunavummiut, although they can't speak it. They are human too (68 year old woman).

I think it is a case by case (28 year old man).

No [they cannot be considered as Nunavummiut] because they come here only for a short time and then they leave (41 year old woman).

In such a perspective, Qallunaaq too can be considered to be Nunavummiut, though it also depends on their commitment to the territory and on the length of their residence. One respondent draws an interesting distinction between being a *Nunavummiuq* and being *from Nunavut*:

If one has just arrived, he/she wouldn't be anybody from Nunavut. But if one were to live here for a while, he/she would then be considered a Nunavummiuq. And if he/she could talk in Inuktitut and if one were born in Nunavut, then he/she would be somebody from Nunavut (38 year old woman).

Two elders state that language is the only characteristic able to define a genuine Nunavummiuq, and even a real Inuk:

It would appear that a person who can't speak Inuktitut may not be considered a real Nunavummiuq (77 year old man).

He/she would be considered a non-Inuk, although he/she is [Inuk], because he/she has forgotten his/her language (59 year old man).

Finally, filiation ("blood") is an important criterion for several respondents, who deem that persons of Inuit parentage can be considered genuine Nunavummiut, even if they do not speak Inuktitut:

I recognise my grandma, I recognise my mother. She was born in an igloo. Just because I don't speak anymore doesn't mean I'm not an Inuk anymore (30 year old part-Inuk man).

Yes, that particular person [who doesn't speak Inuktitut] has Inuk blood in him/her. We could try and teach him/her stuff like Inuktitut programs (24 year old woman).

I consider Inuit as the genuine Nunavummiut. Even though some Qallunaat have been here for quite some time, I don't really consider them Nunavummiut (23 year old woman).

## 24.1 Identity and language

<b>Table 27 – May an Inuk who does not speak the language be considered a real Inuk? (N = 29)</b>			
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Mixed response</b>
-30 years old	10	3	3
30-49 years old	4	2	1
50+ years old	2	2	2
Total	16	7	6

A large majority of respondents under 30 consider that one can be considered a real Inuk even if he or she does not speak Inuktitut. The situation is the same with respondents aged between 30 and 49, though the majority is lower. Among older individuals (50 and over), however, answers are equally distributed between those who say "yes", those who answer "no", and those who give a mixed response. Many respondents, especially among the younger ones, believe that physical characteristics and genealogy (one or two parents are Inuit) are more crucial than language for defining identity. In other words, speaking Inuktitut may be important but ignoring the language is not fatal because it can be learned or re-learned at any age:

If they have Inuit features but can't speak in Inuktitut, I would call him/her an Inuk (21 year old woman).

I can consider a person who doesn't speak Inuktitut to be an Inuk because they came from an Inuk mother (74 year old man).

It does not just depend on anything. If they are Inuit they are Inuit, so there is no right or wrong about them, I guess (28 year old man).

It is complicated. There are some Qallunaat who are able to speak in Inuktitut and I see them more of being Inuit even though they are Qallunaat. Maybe I'd see the Inuk person who can't speak in Inuktitut as a person who really is not an Inuk. But saying that is not really nice (36 year old woman).

He/she [who does not speak Inuktitut] would be considered a non-Inuk, although he/she is [an Inuk], but he/she has forgotten his/her language. He/she is a real Inuk who lost his/her language (59 year old man).

This way of seeing things, where one may be considered an Inuk without speaking Inuktitut, is realistic and positive. It shows that even if you did not have the opportunity to learn the language, you are an Inuk all the same if you feel so. And if you really wish to reconnect with your cultural identity, it is always possible to learn Inuktitut in order to become better integrated within your community.

## **Interviews with language professionals**

In October 2003, the author conducted five interviews in Iqaluit, with six individuals (one interview was with a couple) professionally involved in language matters. In the following paragraphs, we will cast a look at how these respondents answered a set of questions (Appendix B) about the desirability and reality of preserving Inuktitut in Nunavut.

Among the six interviewees, three were male and three female, four Inuit and two Qallunaat, and their ages ranged between 30 and 70 years old. Two of the respondents were high ranking political personnel in Nunavut ministries concerned with language and culture, one was a high ranking civil servant, another a chief official in the judicial system, a fifth worked for NTI, the Nunavut Agreement's managerial corporation, and the last taught Inuktitut.

When asked if Nunavut has provided Inuit with tools for developing their language, all respondents agree that the main difference between the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Government of Nunavut resides in the fact that in Nunavut, Inuktitut is a major preoccupation, which was not the case in the NWT. For example, several people in the education system are now dealing with curricula in Inuktitut, while under NWT, only one person was in charge of that question. But some interviewees also add that legislative tools are not sufficient. On the one hand, practical tools such as standard dictionaries, entertaining literature in Inuktitut and efficient curricula are missing, and on the other, if Inuit do not make special efforts to actually speak their language, legislation is useless.

Concerning the perceived future of Inuktitut in Nunavut (in eastern Nunavut in fact, since the language is now declining in the western part of the territory; cf. below), respondents note that one of the reasons for establishing Nunavut was to safeguard the language, but that some obstacles seem to work against that. Two persons mention the existence of a bureaucratic culture, imported from the NWT when Nunavut was born, which makes difficult the implementation of any policy in favour of Inuktitut. Another attributes the problem to the high number of Qallunaat political personnel (*e.g.*, deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers), who contribute to the predominance of English in the absence of any real linguistic legislation. According to that respondent, the Nunavut administration should catch up with the Legislative Assembly which already functions in Inuktitut. Finally, one very official interviewee admits that if the Government of Nunavut does not seem to do much in favour of Inuktitut, it does not do anything against language survival, and that governmental and non-governmental efforts should be pooled together to ensure the future of the language.

All respondents agree that language should be as important as economy and politics when choices are to be made. At least two of them insist that in Nunavut, speaking Inuktitut is essential to a good quality of life. Therefore, language and culture are more than symbols. You must invest in them – even make sacrifices says one interviewee – if you want people to live a satisfactory life. Two respondents insist that contrarily to what many people, including Inuit, think, Inuktitut definitively has an economic potential, in the field of ecological and cultural tourism for instance. Some successful businesspeople are monolingual in Inuktitut: they know how to translate their language into action. Finally, an interviewee does not hesitate to say that the ultimate success or failure of Nunavut will be judged on language preservation, because, with the exception of Greenland, Nunavut is North America's only political jurisdiction where an Aboriginal language is

official and forms the majority idiom.

Respondents recognise that it is important to communicate in Inuktitut, both within the Nunavut administration and between the Government of Nunavut and Inuit residents. They notice that the amount of written official documents has increased since 1999 – though all these documents are translated from English; none was originally written in Inuktitut – but that in order to have Government of Nunavut employees communicate orally in Inuktitut, long-standing habits have to be changed, which may be difficult to realise. One interviewee, perhaps more realistic than the others, states that English will remain the language of administration, but that Inuit employees should be encouraged to use Inuktitut in daily life, and that this language should by all means become the principal channel of communication with residents, because many of them, monolingual elders for instance, have no way to communicate with their government.

When asked if the use of Inuktitut in government offices and other official organisations has actually increased since Nunavut, all respondents answer no – except, maybe, for written communication – though they say the atmosphere has changed. Nowadays, it is considered normal to use Inuktitut officially, and it would be unthinkable not to translate documents, which was not the case under NWT. In some offices, Inuit employees now make it a point to address visitors in Inuktitut, and many Qallunaat have started saying *ullaakkut* instead of "good morning." Civil servants receive awards for being bilingual and Qallunaat employees can be taught Inuktitut, though two respondents consider these courses as not really adapted; it would be better instead to improve the Inuktitut of semi-lingual young Inuit. Nobody seems to think, however, that the goal of making Inuktitut the Government of Nunavut's working language for 2020 will be reached.

Interviewees do not think either that using Inuktitut in the community has increased since Nunavut, though this may be different in smaller villages. But even there, as one respondent says, if young people speak Inuktitut, they behave like Qallunaat. Another adds, somewhat ironically, that when the government has to set special days aside to celebrate things like language and culture, it is the surest proof that these things are dying. More optimistically, a Government of Nunavut official mentions that people have now become more conscious about speaking Inuktitut, even if the actual use of the language may not have really increased. Another official states that the only way to have Inuktitut becoming the general working language at the community level would be to consent a concentrated effort that would involve Inuit organisations as well as the government.

According to two respondents, young people in particular seem to have become more conscious about language. The Government of Nunavut tries to promote Inuktitut in day care centres and by organising language competitions for the young. But, says another respondent, kids are still told they should speak English in order to get a job. So, here again, efforts should be made to develop a new way of thinking about language among young people.

Finally, three interviewees – all of them Inuit – answered the question whether a resident of Nunavut who did not speak Inuktitut could be considered a real *Nunavummiuq*. Two of them say that any resident of Nunavut, whatever his or her ethnic origin, belongs to the community – because he/she pays taxes there adds one – but that more deeply, Inuit feel that you belong to Nunavut because of your ancestry. One respondent admits that the situation is ambiguous, but that it should remain as it is for political and financial reasons. The third interviewee makes a clear distinction between *Nunavummiut*, all residents of Nunavut, and *Inutuinnait* or *Inummariit*,

"real" or ethnic Inuit.

To summarise, the six language and culture professionals interviewed in Iqaluit do not seem to see a real difference in the use of Inuktitut since the advent of Nunavut, but some of them, maybe the majority, perceive a change in language attitudes: the atmosphere is not the same; Inuktitut has now become a *bona fide* mean of communication, the legitimate language in an Aboriginal territory such as Nunavut. In this way, their opinions are not too different from those of the 35 Iqaluit respondents whose answers have been analysed in the preceding section.

As some language professionals hint, there would not have been any reason to establish Nunavut if it had not been done in order to preserve and develop the language and culture of the Inuit. But just saying this is not sufficient. Special efforts involving the Government of Nunavut as well as Inuit organisations, the community and individuals must be made if Inuktitut is to survive. As a friend of the author (not interviewed here) told him after having delivered a college-level course in a Baffin community: "When my students discussed the chief reasons for establishing Nunavut, preserving language and culture was always mentioned first. But when they were given the choice between an Inuktitut and an English form for evaluating my course, they all chose the English form."

For comparison's sake, two language professionals from the Inuinnaqtun-speaking area of the Kitikmeot region of Nunavut were interviewed in Cambridge Bay by the author in May 2006. The language situation in the Kitikmeot differs from what it is in the Baffin region. With a few exceptions, no Inuinnaik under 25 or 30 years of age speak the language, and only a minority of young people understand it. Efforts are made to preserve Inuinnaqtun – it is sporadically taught in school, interpreter-translators are available, and the Cambridge Bay Kitikmeot Heritage Centre collects material in the local dialect – but it does not seem that it can fully recover and become once again the principal mean of communication; English-dominant bilingualism will seemingly remain the rule.

The opinions of the two Inuinnaik respondents are quite similar to those heard in Iqaluit. They did not see much change in language use since 1999, though Inuinnaqtun is now a little more visible and respected by Qallunaat than it was then. The creation of Nunavut has promoted Aboriginal speech forms, but it has also increased bureaucracy. Both respondents find that the Kitikmeot lies behind eastern Nunavut in terms of linguistic development because, for a good part, the region's needs are not really met. They feel Inuktitut is dominant and that Inuinnaik are far partners within Nunavut. In such a context, it is almost impossible that by 2020 Inuinnaqtun become the government's working language in the Kitikmeot.

Generally speaking, people should augment their use of Inuinnaq language and culture at home and in the community (on the local radio for instance), but this risks being wishful thinking. In a situation where a number of elders are bilingual, one cannot really expect younger people to switch back to Inuinnaqtun. It is important, though, to have the best of both worlds and for this reason, a special effort should be made to teach youngsters their ancestral language. This could happen if regular school programs in Inuinnaqtun are developed, and if kids are given enough time to learn. As one respondent says: "Learning a language is a life affair".

These two opinions may sound a bit pessimistic, but they are based on a language situation that is different from what can be observed in eastern Nunavut. Language-wise, though, if care is not taken, places such as Iqaluit might well become like Cambridge Bay in 10-15 years from now.

## Conclusion and recommendations

The interviews analysed in the preceding sections, our observations in Iqaluit, as well as data from published material consulted during the course of the research enable us to draw some conclusions on Inuit discourse and identity after the advent of Nunavut (for a selected bibliography on preserving knowledge and language in the North, see Appendix C).

Generally speaking, our findings agree with those of other sociolinguists who worked recently in Nunavut. Shelley Tulloch for instance, in her study of the language attitudes of young adults in Iqaluit, Pangnirtung and Pond Inlet<sup>4</sup>, has shown that her respondents found Inuktitut necessary for better participating in community life, but often complained about their lack of fluency in the language and about the attitude of some older individuals who addressed them in English rather than in Inuktitut. Basing his findings on a broader sample, Ian Martin<sup>5</sup> found that a majority of Nunavummiut believe that Inuktitut should be encouraged by all means, but that even with the advent of Nunavut, the number of students who speak it has not stopped diminishing over the years.

Our own respondents often answer in two ways. They are sometimes realistic, trying to describe the language situation as they perceive it. In such cases, they generally tell about English being increasingly used in Iqaluit homes and workplaces, because people find it more practical than Inuktitut for expressing current activities and interests within a modern Inuit community, and this even if the language is valued as a tool for uniting all Aboriginal community members. On the other hand, respondents may answer in a more idealistic way, stating what they would wish to see in the future: Inuktitut being transmitted to younger generations and continuing to thrive in the North. This second type of response reveals a lot about Inuit identity. Inuit are proud of being Inuit, proud of having been able to establish their own government in Nunavut (though they do not consider themselves to be different from other Inuit), and Inuktitut acts as a powerful symbol of that pride, even if its use may be declining.

One of the reasons mentioned for this decline is that many different dialects are spoken in Iqaluit. People cannot always understand each other and they prefer to use English. Some respondents, though, believe that all Inuit dialects in presence are mingling into one, the Iqaluit dialect. This speech form could serve as the local *lingua franca* (language understood by everyone) instead of English, if it were not for the Qallunaat, who account for almost half of the population and whose comprehension of Inuktitut is generally nil.

The research shows that in Iqaluit, English is still predominant on the language market (see Introduction, note 3, for a definition of this term). This is due to the fact that: 1) English is most often required when one is searching for a job; 2) it is the principal vehicle of popular culture (television, music, etc.); 3) contacts with Qallunaat occur in English. But Inuktitut is starting to make itself a place. This is due for a good part to the fact that it has become more visible and politically important since the creation of Nunavut, and that its market value has augmented in consequence. Moreover, it is also valued as the most fitting language for expressing oneself in informal contexts and, as I have already mentioned, for symbolising the fact that one is an Inuk.

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<sup>4</sup> Tulloch, Shelley, 2004. *Inuktitut and Inuit Youth: Language Attitudes as a Basis for Language Planning*, Ph.D. dissertation, Université Laval, Québec.

<sup>5</sup> Martin, Ian, 2000. *Report of the Research Project: Language Attitudes, Ability, Use, Vitality and Sociolinguistic Trends Most Likely to Affect School-Based Language Planning and Promotion Policies*, Iqaluit, Dept. of Education.



This means that there exists an alternative language market for Inuktitut (as demonstrated by Donna Patrick in her book *Language, Politics, and Social Interaction in an Inuit Community*, Berlin/New York, Mouton deGruyter, 2003) besides the principal market dominated by English.

Even if the Nunavut Agreement does not say anything about language, and if the Legislative Assembly has problems defining a language law adapted to Nunavut, linguistic policies are, nonetheless, in existence. This helps giving more visibility to Inuktitut, and it is one of the factors making individuals of childbearing age conscious about their responsibility to transmit the language to their children. The establishment of Nunavut thus has a nation-building effect. The linguistic and cultural policies proposed by the Government of Nunavut contribute to transforming Inuktitut and Inuit culture into emblems of the specificity of the Inuit people within Canada and, hence, of their innate right to govern their own territory.

Some respondents, though, especially among elders, are critical of Inuit politicians, whose promise to protect Inuktitut was, they believe, forgotten as soon as they were in power. This explains why several individuals do not think that Inuktitut will have become the working language of the Government of Nunavut by 2020, as stated in the Bathurst Mandate. They are disappointed too by the IQ (*Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*) policy of making use of traditional knowledge in the governance of Nunavut which, they think, has not yielded concrete results. One researcher, though, Julie-Ann Tomiak<sup>6</sup>, believes that by redefining and reconstructing symbolic capital, the IQ policy attempts at incorporating some elements of the alternative Inuktitut language market into the dominant English one. This would give more power and more value to the Aboriginal language and, as a consequence, it may partly change the way in which both markets operate, even if the final goal – incorporating IQ and Inuktitut in the daily operation of the Government of Nunavut by 2020 – is not reached as originally envisioned.

Despite its increasing symbolic and political value, Inuktitut seems to be in decline in Iqaluit homes. Testimonies and observation show that English and code-switching are increasingly used by younger speakers. Parents say that they are conscious about the need to address their children in Inuktitut in order to transmit the language which, they feel, is an important task identity-wise. But in reality, it appears that a majority of younger parents speak English to their kids or mix both languages. And even when they address them in Inuktitut, the children generally answer in English. Comparison with similar situations elsewhere<sup>7</sup> show that it is quite possible that young children do not realise that they use two languages when mixing Inuktitut with English. This may change when they become teenagers, some of them then becoming aware that Inuktitut contributes defining their ethnic specificity. There would, thus, exist a cyclical revitalisation of language, whereby Inuktitut would regain its importance when people – at least some of them – grow up. But this revitalisation might be impaired by the intransigent attitude of several older speakers, who promote an ideology of linguistic purity and criticise teenagers and young adults because they do not speak “proper Inuktitut.” Such an attitude can be detrimental to language preservation. After all, it may be better to speak a simplified version of Inuktitut than no Inuktitut at all.

What actually happens, as shown by our interviews and observations, is that when bilingual speakers want to communicate, it is important for them to be sure that they are understood.

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<sup>6</sup> Tomiak, Julie-Ann, 2003. *Power, Identity and Discourse: The Politics of Language Choice in Nunavut*, M.A. thesis, Freie Universität Berlin.

<sup>7</sup> For a Cree example. cf. Collette, Vincent, 2005. Rétention linguistique et changement social à Mistissini, *Études/Inuit/Studies*, 29(1-2): 207-219.

Proper comprehension predominates over ethnic promotion and questions of identity. In a context where speakers under 40-45 years of age have been partly or entirely schooled in English by Qallunaat teachers, and where the predominant popular culture is anglophone, the words and meanings most individuals have at their command for expressing contemporary life in a modern community are English, because English is the language in which they were first learned. This explains why despite their wish to transmit and promote Inuktitut, and their sincere assertion that the Aboriginal language is essential to Inuit identity, many speakers find it easier to express themselves in English or in a mixed code when they have to speak about topics other than common feelings, basic assertions (*e.g.*, “nice day today”) or subsistence activities. They simply do not possess the required cognitive and linguistic tools to communicate fully in Inuktitut, because they were never taught them.

This means that the key to the survival and flourishing of Inuktitut is education. Our respondents are conscious about that. All of them say that they would like Inuktitut to be taught up to Grade 12. And they are right. If the present situation continues, the language not being taught beyond Grades 3 or 4, it will never be possible, in the opinion of this author, to give Inuktitut its proper place in Nunavut. It will, for sure, continue to be spoken for some decades, at least outside of Iqaluit, but its use risks being increasingly limited to petty topics, on the one hand, and highly symbolic domains (traditional life, political discourse, religious ceremonies) on the other. It will never become Nunavut’s principal working language.

Researchers and policy-makers generally agree on the necessity of developing school education in Inuktitut if one wants to witness a Nunavut whose bilingualism would work in favour, rather than against the Aboriginal language. For instance, in a report submitted to CLEY in 2000<sup>8</sup>, the sociolinguist Ian Martin notes that the objective of the existing educational model is to make English speakers out of Inuit students, in order to enable them to continue their education beyond Grades 4 and 5. The ideological orientation of such a system is seriously flawed. It is not bilingual and it deprives students from access to IQ, a fact which opposes their basic linguistic rights. In consequence, the Government of Nunavut should: 1) reaffirm its bilingual commitment for 2020 and clarify it as far as education is concerned; 2) mandate a strong model of bilingual education; 3) propose a limited set of strong options (*e.g.*, English and Inuktitut should be used equally or unequally) adapted to different cases. Most critically, a new generation of Inuit teachers should be trained, with a hiring target for 2020 of 85% Inuit staff in the schools.

Another report<sup>9</sup>, released by Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) in 2004, reaches similar conclusions. It states that Nunavut is the only jurisdiction within Canada where a majority of the population speaks an Aboriginal language. But in spite of that, there does not exist any K-12 Inuktitut curriculum. This means that there is not any barrier against the erosion of the language. The Languages Commissioner made excellent proposals to change the situation, but they have not been implemented. In a similar way, the Bathurst Mandate pinpointed education as an important priority, but to no avail. There exist some school materials in Inuktitut, but only for the lower elementary grades. Funding and training are, thus, urgently needed, especially in view of the fact that two thirds of teachers (including almost all high school teachers) are Qallunaat who have no training for the North and, for sure, do not speak Inuktitut. For these reasons, more money should be spent on education and on the training of Inuit teachers, in order to plan for the

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<sup>8</sup> Martin, Ian, 2000. *Aqijqatigiingniq. Language of Instruction Research Paper*, Iqaluit, Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth, Government of Nunavut.

<sup>9</sup> NTI, 2004. *An Annual Report on the State of Inuit Culture and Society 2002-2003*, Iqaluit, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.

implementation of a K-12 Inuktitut curriculum for 2010.

In the present report, I cannot but endorse these recommendations, which have been repeated once again by Justice Thomas Berger in a recent document (Thomas R. Berger, *The Nunavut Conciliator's Final Report*, Ottawa, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2006). Without a full K-12 curriculum in Inuktitut, one cannot expect any form of balanced bilingualism where Inuktitut and English would have the same strength.

Other recommendations come from our respondents, who suggest very concrete measures for helping Inuktitut become the working language of Nunavut. These include:

- increasing the number of Inuit civil servants;
- enticing Qallunaat into learning Inuktitut;
- reinforcing Inuktitut in the Legislative Assembly;
- translating more technical texts into Inuktitut;
- promoting reading in Inuktitut among youngsters;
- increasing the role of elders and of Inuit intellectuals in the community.

In the opinion of the author, Inuktitut can, and must be at the same time the language of identity and the principal mean of communication in Nunavut, as it has been in Greenland since a long time. But in order to achieve this, to make ideal visions congruent with reality, efforts must be consented in the fields of education, public communication, cultural development and personal language attitudes. One can be an Inuk without speaking Inuktitut, but if the language continues to decline, a whole original way of envisioning the world risks disappearing for good. As any other language – and Greenlandic Kalaallisut is a good example – Inuktitut can easily adapt to the expression of contemporary life. There is, thus, no reason that if proper means are taken, it will not survive and thrive into the 22<sup>nd</sup> century.

## **Appendix A. Interview schedule with Iqaluit residents**

0. Sex; year of birth; year of arrival in Iqaluit; from where? Place of work; do you have a spouse? Is he/she an Inuk? Number of children.
1. What is the first language you learned to speak? If Inuktitut, which dialect?
2. What is your second language? How did you learn it? How do you rate your knowledge of it?
3. Have you ever been to school? If so, number of years completed at school; did you learn any Inuktitut at school? Do you read Inuktitut syllabics? Do you write it? Do you read English?
4. What language(s) do you generally speak at home? Did it change in any way since the last few years? If so, how did it change?
5. What language(s) do you generally speak at work? Did it change in any way since the last few years? Do you expect it to change in the future? How and why?
6. What language(s) do you generally speak when visiting administrative offices? Stores? Your children's school? Did it change since the last few years? Do you expect it to change? How?
7. In your community, generally speaking, do you have observed any change in language usage since the advent of Nunavut? Do you expect any change in the future? What change?
8. In what language is it easier for you to express your feelings? To speak about land activities? To discuss things going on at home? To speak about school with your kids? To speak about your work? To discuss politics and administration?
9. What language is the most useful for earning a living in the North? Did it change over the last few years? Do you expect it to change? How and why?
10. What language is the most useful for learning about the outside world? Did it change over the last few years? Do you expect it to change? How and why?
11. What language is the most useful for communicating with other people in your community? Did it change over the last few years? Do you expect it to change? How and why?
12. Is it important for Inuit politicians to express their ideas in Inuktitut? Why? Would it be useful for them to express them in English?
13. Is it really useful to have simultaneous translation in the Legislative Assembly? Why?
14. Is it important for people working in the administration of Nunavut to communicate in Inuktitut among themselves? Why? Is written communication in Inuktitut important too?
15. Is it important for the administration of Nunavut to communicate in Inuktitut with Nunavut residents? Why? Do you have problems receiving services in the language of your choice? Getting written documentation in the language of your choice?
16. Do you think that the amount of Inuktitut used in Nunavut Government offices has increased over the last few years? Should it increase in the future? Can Inuktitut really become the working language of the government?
17. Do you think that the amount of Inuktitut used in the community in general has increased over the last few years? Should it increase in the future? Can Inuktitut really become the most common working language in Nunavut?
18. Would you agree that the Government of Nunavut (and/or Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.) invest large sums of public money to help increasing the usage of Inuktitut within Nunavut?
19. Do you think your (great-)grandchildren will still speak Inuktitut? How can this happen? Is it important for young people to speak Inuktitut? Why?
20. Is Inuktitut more important for young people now that Nunavut is in existence? Why? Do you expect this importance to increase in the future? How?

21. Should school help young people acquiring a better knowledge of Inuktitut? How? Should teaching in Inuktitut be extended to secondary school? What about teaching in English?
22. In your community, did relations between Inuit and Qallunaat (non-Inuit) change since the advent of Nunavut? Do you expect them to change in the future? How and why? Do Qallunaat feel involved with Nunavut?
23. Do you think that Inuit have more power to do as they wish since the advent of Nunavut? Can you give an example?
24. Do you feel prouder to be an Inuk since the advent of Nunavut? As a resident of Nunavut, do you feel different from other Canadian Inuit? In which way? Do you feel Nunavut is an example for other Inuit? For other Aboriginal nations? How?
25. May a resident of Nunavut who does not speak Inuktitut be considered a genuine *Nunavummiuq*? May an Inuk who does not speak the language be considered a real Inuk?

## **Appendix B. Interview schedule with Nunavut officials concerned with language policies**

0. Sex; year of birth; year of arrival in Iqaluit; from where? Place of work; do you have a spouse? Number of children.
1. What is the first language you learned to speak? If Inuktitut, which dialect?
2. What is your second language? How did you learn it? How do you rate your knowledge of it?
3. What are your position and responsibilities in the organization where you work?
4. Since when do you hold that position? What were you doing before?
5. What are your organization's objectives (in general and in relation to language planning and policies)?
6. How does it manage to fulfil these objectives? Does it really succeed fulfilling them?
7. Do you think that the Nunavut Agreement and the establishment of Nunavut have given Inuit tools to develop their language? Could you cite some examples (economic, political, etc.) of such tools?
8. What do you personally think about the future of Inuktitut in Nunavut, in the following domains:
  - a) administration and government;
  - b) job market;
  - c) education;
  - d) mass communication;
  - e) language used at home.
9. Is the future of Inuktitut linked to the development and promotion of Inuit culture? How?
10. In your opinion, what is the relative importance of language, in relation to economy and politics, as the development of Nunavut is concerned?
11. Do you think it worthwhile for the Government of Nunavut and/or Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. to invest large sums of public money into language development? Why?
12. Is it important for people working in the administration of Nunavut to communicate in Inuktitut among themselves? Why? Is written communication in Inuktitut important too?
13. Is it important for the administration of Nunavut to communicate in Inuktitut with Nunavut residents? Why?
14. Do you think that the amount of Inuktitut used in Nunavut Government offices has increased over the last few years? Should it increase in the future? Can Inuktitut really become the working language of the government? If so, when will this happen?
15. Do you think that the amount of Inuktitut used in the community in general has increased over the last few years? Should it increase in the future? Can Inuktitut really become the most common working language in Nunavut?
16. What language(s) do you, personally, generally use at home? At work?
17. Is Inuktitut more important for young people now that Nunavut is in existence? Why? Do you expect this importance to increase in the future? How?
18. Did relations between Inuit and Qallunaat (non-Inuit) change since the advent of Nunavut? Do you expect them to change in the future? How and why? Do Qallunaat feel involved with Nunavut?

19. Do you feel prouder to be an Inuk since the advent of Nunavut? As a resident of Nunavut, do you feel different from other Canadian Inuit? In which way? Do you feel Nunavut is an example for other Inuit? For other Aboriginal nations? How?
20. May a resident of Nunavut who does not speak Inuktitut be considered a genuine *Nunavummiuq*? May an Inuk who does not speak the language be considered a real Inuk?

## Appendix C

### Selected bibliography on preserving knowledge and language in the North

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by Délia Synnott, B.A. (Anthropology)

#### Knowledge

ADAMOWICZ, W., T. BECKLEY, D. MACDONALD, L. JUST, M. LUCKERT, E. MURRAY, and W. PHILLIPS.

1998 « In search of forest resource values of indigenous peoples: Are nonmarket valuation techniques applicable? », *Society and Natural Resources* 11, no. 1: 51 - 66.

APORTA, Claudio

2002 Life on the Ice, Understanding the Codes of a Changing Environment, *Polar Record*, 38(207): 341-354.

BATTISTE, Marie (ed.)

2000 *Reclaiming indigenous voice and vision*, Vancouver, UBC Press.

BATTISTE, Marie and James (Sa'ke'j) YOUNGBLOOD HENDERSON

2000 *Protecting indigenous knowledge and heritage: a global challenge*, Saskatoon, Purich.

BERKES, Fikret

1972 *Environmental aspects of the pulp and paper industry*, Montreal, Physics Department, McGill University.

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# **Inuit Discourse and Identity after the Advent of Nunavut**

## **Summary**

This report outlines the principal findings of a research project on Inuit discourse and identity since the advent of Nunavut, undertaken conjointly by Université Laval's CIÉRA and Nunavut Arctic College's (Nunatta Campus) Inuit Language and Culture Programs, thanks to Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) funds. The project was under the direction of Prof. Louis-Jacques Dorais (Université Laval) and Dr. Susan Sammons (Nunavut Arctic College). The present report is based for a large part on an analysis of interview data undertaken in 2004-05 by Vincent Collette. These 35 interviews with Inuit residents aged between 18 and 85 had been conducted in 2003-04 in Iqaluit by Nunavut Arctic College students and staff. May all researchers, interviewers and interviewees be sincerely thanked here.

Our interview respondents answer in two ways. They are sometimes realistic, trying to describe the language situation as they perceive it. In such cases, they generally tell about English being increasingly used in Iqaluit homes and workplaces, because people find it more practical than Inuktitut for expressing current activities and interests within a modern Inuit community, and this even if the native language is valued as a tool for uniting all Aboriginal community members. On the other hand, respondents may answer in a more idealistic way, stating what they would wish to see in the future: Inuktitut being transmitted to younger generations and continuing to thrive in the North. This second type of response reveals a lot about Inuit identity. Inuit are proud of being Inuit, proud of having been able to establish their own government in Nunavut, and Inuktitut acts as a powerful symbol of that pride, even if its use may be declining.

The research outlines the predominance of English in Iqaluit, which is due to the fact that: 1) English is most often required when one is searching for a job; 2) it is the principal vehicle of popular culture (television, music, etc.); 3) contacts with Qallunaat occur in English. But Inuktitut is starting to make itself a place. This is due for a good part to the fact that it has become more visible and politically important since the creation of Nunavut, and that its market value has augmented in consequence. Moreover, it is also valued as the most fitting language for expressing oneself in informal contexts and for symbolising the fact that one is an Inuk. The establishment of Nunavut thus has a nation-building effect. The linguistic and cultural policies proposed by the Government of Nunavut contribute to transforming Inuktitut and Inuit culture into emblems of the specificity of the Inuit people within Canada and, hence, of their innate right to govern their own territory.

Despite its increasing symbolic and political value, Inuktitut seems to be in decline in Iqaluit homes. Testimonies and observation show that English and code-switching are increasingly used by younger speakers. Parents say that they are conscious about the need to address their children in Inuktitut in order to transmit the language which, they feel, is an important task identity-wise. But in reality, it appears that a majority of younger parents speak English to their kids or mix both languages. And even when they address them in Inuktitut, the children generally answer in English. This may change when the kids become teenagers, some of them then becoming aware that Inuktitut contributes defining their ethnic specificity. But this revitalisation might be impaired by the intransigent attitude of several older speakers, who promote an ideology of linguistic purity and criticise teenagers and young adults because they do not speak "proper Inuktitut." Such an attitude can be detrimental to language preservation. After all, it may be better to speak a simplified version of Inuktitut than no Inuktitut at all.

What actually happens, as shown by our interviews and observations, is that when bilingual speakers want to communicate, it is important for them to be sure that they are understood. Proper comprehension predominates over ethnic promotion and questions of identity. In a context where speakers under 40-45 years of age have been partly or entirely schooled in English by Qallunaat teachers, and where the predominant popular culture is anglophone, the words and meanings most individuals have at their command for expressing contemporary life in a modern community are English, because English is the language in which they were first learned. This explains why despite their wish to transmit and promote Inuktitut, and their sincere assertion that the Aboriginal language is essential to Inuit identity, many speakers find it easier to express themselves in English or in a mixed code when they have to speak about topics other than common feelings, basic assertions or subsistence activities. They simply do not possess the required cognitive and linguistic tools to communicate fully in Inuktitut, because they were never taught them.

This means that the key to the survival and flourishing of Inuktitut is education. Our respondents are conscious about that. All of them say that they would like Inuktitut to be taught up to Grade 12. And they are right. If the present situation continues, the language not being taught beyond Grades 3 or 4, it will never be possible, in the opinion of this author, to give Inuktitut its proper place in Nunavut. It will, for sure, continue to be spoken for some decades, at least outside of Iqaluit, but its use risks being increasingly limited to petty topics, on the one hand, and highly symbolic domains (traditional life, political discourse, religious ceremonies) on the other. It will never become Nunavut's principal working language.



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# **Discours et identité inuit après la création du Nunavut**

## **Résumé**

Ce rapport expose les principales conclusions d'un projet de recherche sur le discours et l'identité inuit depuis la création du Nunavut, entrepris conjointement par le CIÉRA de l'Université Laval et les programmes de langue et culture inuit du Collège Nunavut de l'Arctique (campus Nunatta), grâce à une subvention du Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada (CRSHC). Le projet était dirigé par Louis-Jacques Dorais (Université Laval) et Susan Sammons (Collège Nunavut de l'Arctique). Le rapport est en bonne partie basé sur une analyse de données d'entrevues faite par Vincent Collette en 2004-05. Ces 35 entrevues avec des résidents inuit d'Iqaluit âgés de 18 à 85 ans avaient été administrées en 2003-04 par des étudiants et des membres du personnel du Collège Nunavut de l'Arctique. Nous tenons à remercier sincèrement tous les chercheurs, intervieweurs et interviewés ayant participé au projet.

Les participants à nos entrevues donnent deux types de réponse. Ils sont parfois réalistes, essayant de décrire la situation langagière telle qu'ils la perçoivent. Ils parlent alors généralement de l'importance croissante de l'anglais à la maison et dans les lieux de travail d'Iqaluit, importance due au fait que les locuteurs trouvent cette langue plus pratique que l'inuktitut pour parler des activités et intérêts courants dans un village inuit moderne, et ceci même si on valorise la langue autochtone comme outil pouvant unifier tous les membres inuit de la communauté. Par contre, les répondants peuvent parfois répondre de façon plus idéaliste, exprimant alors ce qu'ils souhaitent voir dans le futur : que l'inuktitut soit transmis aux jeunes générations et continue de prospérer dans le Nord. Ce second type de réponse en dit long sur l'identité inuit. Les Autochtones de l'Arctique sont fiers d'être Inuit, fiers d'avoir été capables de créer leur propre gouvernement au Nunavut, et l'inuktitut constitue un symbole puissant de cette fierté, même si son usage semble en déclin.

La recherche fait ressortir la prédominance de l'anglais à Iqaluit, qui paraît liée aux facteurs suivants : 1) on demande généralement aux personnes en quête d'emploi de parler l'anglais; 2) cette langue sert de véhicule principal à la culture populaire (télévision, musique, etc.); 3) les contacts avec les Qallunaat se passent en anglais. Mais l'inuktitut commence à se tailler une place significative. Ceci est dû en bonne partie au fait qu'il est devenu plus visible et plus important politiquement depuis la création du Nunavut et que sa valeur marchande a augmenté en conséquence. Qui plus est, l'inuktitut est aussi valorisé en tant que langue la plus à même de servir de véhicule d'expression en contexte informel, et de symboliser le fait qu'on soit Inuk. La création du Nunavut a donc eu un effet nationalitaire. Les politiques langagières et culturelles du gouvernement du Nunavut contribuent à transformer l'inuktitut et la culture inuit en emblèmes de la spécificité du peuple inuit à l'intérieur du Canada et, par là même, en symboles de leur droit inné à gouverner leur propre territoire.

Malgré sa valeur symbolique et politique croissante, l'inuktitut semble en déclin dans les foyers d'Iqaluit. Les témoignages des répondants, comme les observations effectuées sur place, montrent que l'anglais et le changement de code sont en augmentation chez les jeunes locuteurs. Les parents disent être conscients de la nécessité de parler à leurs enfants en inuktitut afin de transmettre la langue, ce qui, estiment-ils, est une tâche identitaire importante. Mais en réalité, il semble que la majorité des jeunes parents s'adressent en anglais à leurs enfants ou mêlent les deux langues. Et même quand ils leur parlent en inuktitut, les enfants répondent généralement en anglais. Cela pourrait changer quand ces jeunes atteindront l'adolescence. Certains d'entre eux se

rendront alors compte que l'inuktitut contribue à définir leur spécificité ethnique. Mais une telle revitalisation pourrait être mise en danger par l'attitude intransigeante de plusieurs locuteurs âgés, qui promeuvent une idéologie de pureté linguistique en critiquant les adolescents et les jeunes adultes parce qu'ils ne parlent pas le « véritable inuktitut ». Une telle attitude peut nuire à la préservation de la langue. Après tout, mieux vaut parler une version simplifiée de l'inuktitut que pas d'inuktitut du tout.

Ce qui se passe en réalité, comme le montrent nos entrevues et nos observations, c'est que quand des locuteurs bilingues veulent communiquer entre eux, il est important pour eux d'être sûrs d'être compris. La compréhension adéquate prend le pas sur la promotion ethnique et les questions identitaires. Dans un contexte où les locuteurs âgés de moins de 40 ou 45 ans ont été partiellement ou entièrement scolarisés en anglais par des enseignants qallunaat, et où la culture populaire dominante est anglophone, les mots et les significations que la plupart des individus ont à leur disposition pour parler de la vie contemporaine dans une communauté moderne sont anglais. C'est en effet en anglais que ces mots et significations ont été initialement appris. Ceci explique pourquoi plusieurs locuteurs, tout en souhaitant transmettre et promouvoir l'inuktitut et en affirmant avec sincérité que la langue autochtone est essentielle à l'identité inuit, trouvent plus facile de s'exprimer en anglais ou dans un code linguistique mixte quand ils ont à parler de sujets autres que les sensations courantes (« j'ai froid »), les observations de base (« il fait beau ») ou les activités de subsistance. Ils ne possèdent tout simplement pas les outils cognitifs et linguistiques qui leur permettraient de communiquer pleinement en inuktitut, parce qu'on ne les leur a jamais enseignés.

Ceci veut dire que la clé de la survie et de l'épanouissement de l'inuktitut est l'éducation. Nos répondants en sont conscients. Tous affirment qu'ils aimeraient voir l'inuktitut enseigné jusqu'en 12<sup>e</sup> année. Et ils ont raison. Si la situation actuelle se poursuit et que la langue autochtone n'est pas enseignée au-delà de la 3<sup>e</sup> ou 4<sup>e</sup> année, il ne sera jamais possible à mon avis de donner à l'inuktitut la place qui lui revient au Nunavut. On continuera, bien sûr, à le parler pendant quelques décennies, au moins en dehors d'Iqaluit, mais son usage risque d'être de plus en plus limité à des sujets mineurs, d'une part, et à des domaines hautement symboliques (la vie traditionnelle, le discours politique, les cérémonies religieuses), de l'autre. L'inuktitut ne deviendra ainsi jamais la principale langue de travail au Nunavut.